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Benefits of VET

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Table of contents

Theme 1: Benefits of VET <i>Roberto Angotti</i>	page 4
Theme 2: VET and employment-related mobility and migration <i>Marina Cino Pagliarello</i>	page 27
Theme 3: Social mobility, equity and inclusive education <i>Donatella Gobbi</i>	page 47
Theme 4: Transitions <i>Silvana Porcari</i>	page 71

Theme 1: Benefits of VET¹

ABSTRACT²:

This report is divided into two parts: the first reviews the main studies that have estimated the effects of training on company performance, exploring the issues of productivity, innovativeness and profitability (“Vocational training and performance of enterprises”); the second presents the main contributions that have studied outcomes of Life Long Learning for individuals, with particular reference to employment outcomes for young and inactive people, outcomes of training for the employees and benefits in terms of professional mobility (“Determinants, trajectories and outcomes of LLL for individuals”). National studies conducted in 2004-2009 have been taken into consideration. The report ends with some conclusions and a bibliographies which contains 69 studies,42 of which reviewed and commented in the text.

KEY FINDINGS:

There is generally a positive relationship between investment in training and company performance. Training seems to have a positive impact on productivity, while its effect on wages is more debatable. A strong relationship was also found between training and propensity for innovation, in the presence of a varied mix of training methods used and a high degree of internalisation of the training process. However, training has a lower incidence in areas of higher economic density and a greater incidence in local labour markets with a higher level of human capital. There is a rather strong link between investment in training and growth in company profitability, even in the short term. The contribution of training increases if it forms part of an organic company development project, based on the introduction of technological and organisational innovation, and on a mix of different measures with specialist content. Concerning the effects of support policies, doubts have been raised regarding the effectiveness of Interprofessional Funds (sectoral training funds).

Training seems to increase the chances of finding employment for individuals involved by public policies, particularly women, but it is rather ineffective at changing the original employment possibilities of weaker targets. It does not prevent companies’ careful selection of workers to train, a situation that works to the advantage of staff with greater executive power, greater seniority of service

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² This paper looks at the issues of “Vocational training and performance of enterprises (survival, productivity, profitability, innovativeness)” and “Determinants, trajectories and outcomes of LLL for individuals”. The paper examines research concerning two of the topics foreseen in “NRR_Benefits_of_VET_2009.pdf” (Vocational training and performance of enterprises” and “Determinants, trajectories and outcomes of LLL for individuals) , even it had been requested to focus on one topic only. For this reason, we have retained not necessary to focus on social benefits, as off topic.

and higher qualifications. In particular, training co-financed by the ESF does not seem to produce positive results, whether in terms of career progression, decision-making autonomy or contractual stability. However, in general participation in LLL seems to produce positive results in terms of professional mobility, with strong potential demand for training among workers, but a large gap between expected and actual benefits, particularly among the over 55s.

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, there has been a growing body of studies, analyses and research papers in Italy on the outcomes of vocational training (particularly in relation to employment outcomes)³. There have been fewer explorations of the benefits and impact of training on companies and employed individuals. Many of these studies has been evaluation studies, in virtue of the strong demand for evaluation that has arisen following the implementation of programmes financed by EU structural funds and some specific national and regional legislation⁴.

In the last five years (2004-2009), this type of literature, in the specific field of vocational training, has however become less frequent, in line with the fall in institutional buyers, which increasingly less often require evaluations of training programme implementation.⁵ It should however be noted that, in the period under review, legislation has been introduced in Italy that should favour the development of an integrated governance system for continuing training, in line with the huge public and private investments and the emergence of new parties managing training programmes for employees, but for which there is not yet an informative framework⁶.

³ The start of the debate on the issues of evaluating training results in Italy can probably be attributed to Quaglino's study (Quaglino, 1979); it was relaunched a few years later by other studies: Amietta and Amietta, 1989; Bulgarelli *et al.*, 1990; Isfol-Cee, 1992. A review of impact evaluations conducted in Italy until 2002 can be found in Trivellato *et al.*, 2003.

⁴ Especially for this reason, the theme is of growing importance since the 90s. It has been observed how this type of research is often heavily conditioned by institutional demand, characterised by a view that it is a task to be completed rather than something to be learnt from. This development has led to the division into sectors of evaluations and little connection between different approaches, producing an approach that has been defined as "hyper-institutional" (Stame, 2000). See also: De Lellis, 2009b.

⁵ This also depends on the fact that, in the new 2007-2013 programming period for structural funds, member states and management authorities are no longer obliged to carry out evaluations on fixed dates. For a complete review of the monitoring and evaluation systems for co-financed continuing training conducted in Italy, see Isfol, 2008 (pp. 13-39), and the ten-year series of annual reports to parliament produced by Isfol (Policies and Offers for Continuing training Area), on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, from 2000 to 2009 (see: Ministry of Labour-Isfol, 2008). As regards the publication of studies on the issue of the evaluation of training, the analysis of available bibliographies provides a representative picture: for example, Bezzi lists numerous publications in the period 1993-2003 and almost none in the subsequent period (Bezzi, 2009).

⁶ This refers to the launch in 2004 of Interprofessional Funds for Continuing Training ("Fondi Interprofessionali per la Formazione Continua", a kind of sectoral training funds), in implementation of Law 388/2000 and Law 289/2002 (Ministry of Labour-Isfol, 2008). In this regard, there is a prolonged lack of information relating to the implementation and evaluation of training programmes financed by Interprofessional Funds, which means that (unlike with the European Social Fund) it is not possible to know (if not only a general outline) either basic information (activities financed and benefits achieved) or the impact that these programmes are having (Severati, 2008). The law implementing Interprofessional Funds provided for an

This situation has not favoured the development of a debate on these issues among experts, institutions and social partners⁷. The contributions that we review in this paper therefore are part of economics and/or evaluation studies, and have mainly been produced by universities or public research bodies.

This paper is divided into two parts: the first reviews the main studies that have estimated the effects of training on company performance, exploring the issues of productivity, innovativeness and profitability; the second presents the main contributions that have studied outcomes of Life Long Learning for individuals, with particular reference to employment outcomes for young and inactive people, outcomes of training for the employed and benefits in terms of professional mobility. National studies⁸ conducted in 2004-2009 have been taken into consideration. As well as company training (financed by private and public investment) and the relative participation of beneficiaries (individuals), studies have also focused on evaluations of training programmes financed using public money. The paper ends with some conclusions and two bibliographies: one contains studies reviewed and commented on in the text (in total 42), while the other lists reference studies (27).

2. Effects of training on company performance

Training does not have a clear and unambiguous effect on company performance. On the one hand, companies' investment in human capital is strictly connected to investment policies and staff recruitment decisions. The potential returns to training for companies include the possibility of having qualified personnel, adaptable to various organisational, technological and market requirements. On the other hand, training rarely brings advantages exclusively to the company that makes the investment, in that once they have acquired training at the company's expense, employees may exploit opportunities for external mobility, using the skills acquired in other companies and thereby gaining better remuneration more easily.⁹

evaluation phase three years after the launch of the funds, which is still expected to be carried out, while data on spending is not yet available (De Lellis, 2009a).

⁷ Consider the still insufficient attention paid to the results of Eurostat's CVTS3 (Continuing Vocational Training Survey), conducted in Italy by Istat and Isfol: with a large mass of data made available to the public on numerous variables and indicators harmonised at European level, decision-makers and related professionals focused almost exclusively on the incidence of companies that offer training and on employee participation in courses. It is not unusual to hear the low training propensity of Italian firms attributed to the fact that the specialisation in traditional production would oblige the company to use less systematic training activities in place of more structured training courses; CVTS data showed however poor use of other forms of training by Italian companies (Cfr. Angotti, 2008).

⁸ In the case of evaluation reports, although they dealt with macro-regional areas (Ob. 1 or Ob. 3 of structural funds), the issues dealt with nevertheless have relevance nationally. The Report takes into consideration several studies which have analyzed Isfol data; this is also due to the improvement of Isfol statistics occurred during recent years. Some macro surveys (for example INDACO – "survey on knowledge") represent the reference source at National level used by analysts, as also requested by the National Statistic Programme of Sistan .

⁹ The system of co-financing training policies in Italy is based on a system of compulsory contributions, through which all companies are obliged to pay an amount equal to 0.30% of the gross salary of their employees; these contributions are used by the state to co-finance continuing training policies. This system should reduce the risk of poaching and turnover in relation to the trained staff: if all companies contribute, by paying a tax, to the creation of a collective fund that they may all use to co-finance their training activities,

Various studies consider the accumulation of human capital as complementary to investment in new technologies and the efficient organisation of production, and look at the role of company training in favouring improved efficiency in production processes, and increasing labour productivity and company performance in terms of competitiveness and profitability. Investment in training can also produce effects at an organisational level and thereby generate a competitive advantage (Caroli and Van Reenen, 2001; Lindbeck and Snower, 2000). Continuing training is often considered the necessary consequence of innovative processes, one of the levers to realise change. Training, understood as a process of developing people's knowledge and abilities, is the measure most used to promote change at individual level and to support change programmes in organisational systems. Normally returns and profitability of training are not immediate, but may only be appraised in the medium to long term, as knowledge is accumulated in different time periods and places, and through a variety of training methods, and can be combined and used in various ways to tackle and resolve problems that until then were unresolved and unexpected.

At this point, we should look at some structural data that characterises Italy's production system, to understand the specific factors of studies applied to the Italian case. Italy has one of the lowest incidence in Europe of companies offering training to their employees and introducing innovation. CVTS3 (Continuing Vocational Training Survey) data shows that the Italian average of companies that offered training (CVT and other forms of training) in 2005 was 32%, just over half the European average (60%). This indicator places Italy third to last in Europe. The figure is however up compared to 1999, when it was below 24%. Information relating to other indicators seems to suggest Italian enterprises are closer to European averages: 29% of employees have attended courses, compared to the European average of 33%; average course duration is 26 hours in Italy, versus 27 hours in Europe, with a cost per participant of 1.492 PPS (Purchasing Power Standard¹⁰) and per training hour of 58 PPS, against 1.413 and 52 PPS respectively in Europe. Compared to the past, the gap between Italy and Europe has narrowed, on the back of various factors, including a decrease in spending to acquire training services from external suppliers. This is not only true for large companies, which, thanks to factors of scale, have been able to reduce and probably rationalise spending on training in the last few years, but also for small companies. Italian enterprises' low propensity to invest steadily in training can generally be attributed to the specific structure of the production system in certain traditional sectors (textiles, tourism, trade), where companies are small and less technologically innovative. (Angotti *et al.*, 2009)

In the following sections, we look at some empirical analyses of Italian companies, which explore the relationship between training, productivity (section 2.1) and innovation (section 2.2), as well as the profitability of training (section 2.3).

it is not necessary to resort to payback clauses to halt the process of external mobility of workers who change company after having benefited from a training course (Bassanini *et al.*, 2007). A study conducted on the main European countries has however shown that employer-provided training does not have a significant effect on the probability that workers will subsequently leave the company (Brunello, 2006).

¹⁰ The value in PPS (Purchasing Power Standard) is calculated by Eurostat at purchasing power parity.

2.1 Productivity

Some recent studies have looked at the relationship between training, productivity and wages. The first, conducted on a panel of employees and companies (Conti, 2005), shows that in Italy, training has a positive effect on productivity, and that this effect is bigger than that on wages. The analysis is based on a dataset that aggregates training data at individual level (Istat/Eurostat-Labour Force Survey) with company-level data on productivity and wages (Bureau van Dijck-AIDA) for a panel of companies representative of Italy's production system in 1996-1999. A panel is used because measuring participation in training over a relatively short time period does not take into consideration the role played by skills accumulated during working life. The author constructed a measure of the stock of training and of control for the various characteristics of companies and workers to assess in what way benefits from training are shared among companies and workers. Through the use of various models and analysis techniques, the study concludes that training has a positive and significant effect on productivity and that its impact on wages is much less strong and smaller. According to the author, this demonstrates that companies receive more from training than they pass on to their employees.

A second more recent study (Colombo and Stanca, 2008) analyses the effects of continuing training on labour productivity from 2002 to 2005, exclusively using company data (Unioncamere-Excelsior and Bureau van Dijck-AIDA). Based on the data of a panel containing longitudinal information, the authors state they were able to account for both the unobserved heterogeneity and the endogeneity of training. The objective of the study was to measure to what extent the higher productivity profited workers through higher wages and to what extent companies. The estimate of direct productivity measures was therefore compared with wages (derived from production equations assuming competitive markets). Using a variety of assessment techniques, these authors also noted that training had a significant positive effect on productivity (“A one per cent increase in training is associated with an increase in value added per worker of about 0.07 per cent”, Colombo and Stanca, 2008, p. 16¹¹). Furthermore, unlike the previous study, the authors also discovered a significant positive impact of training on wages, although this was approximately half the effect it had on productivity¹². We can therefore conclude that the use of wages as a proxy for productivity leads to an underestimation of returns to training. This analysis also used an indicator that measured the intensity of training, i.e. course duration. Finally, the authors assessed if the increases in productivity took place in unequal measure for all occupational groups: the

¹¹ “This result is consistent with the evidence in Dearden et al. (2006), who obtain a coefficient estimate of about 0.6 per cent using a panel of British industries between 1983 and 1996, but find a much smaller effect using individual-level data, concluding that the larger magnitude of the training effects in their paper is largely due to the use of industry-level data. The magnitude of our coefficient estimates are not directly comparable with those of Dearden et al (2006), as their indicator of training intensity is constructed as the proportion of workers in an industry who received training over a given 4-week period in the first quarter of the LFS.” (Colombo and Stanca, 2008, p. 16).

¹² The different nature of the sources used should however be noted: while Conti uses data collected on individuals, Colombo and Stanca only used company data.

estimates made indicate wide and significant effects for blue-collar workers, and scarce and insignificant effects for white-collar workers.

A third study (Brunello, 2008) analysed the effects of training on labour productivity from 2000 to 2005. Again in this case, the study used panel data from a sample of firms (Isfol-INDACO¹³ and Bureau van Dijck-AIDA) representative at national level, with longitudinal information. This study confirmed that training produces an increase in productivity. In fact, average productivity per employee, measured both in terms of value added and production per capita, has a positive correlation with training intensity, measured in terms of training hours per capita. This means that if companies included in the data analysed increased training hours provided by 10% (approximately two additional hours of training per year), then per capita production would increase by half a percentage point, while value added per capita would increase by just over a point. Consequently, we can hypothesise that an increase of 10% in training hours generates an increase in production of approximately EUR 7,900 per worker.

A detailed study on large companies (with 250 or more employees), again conducted on Isfol INDACO-Enterprises data (Angotti, 2008), shows that in most companies, investment in training is organised and implemented in ways not able to guarantee an increase in company competitiveness. This hypothesis is backed up by the following evidence: a) numerous firms invest in training in a discontinuous manner over time; b) training is often directed at areas that do not represent strategic priorities; c) only 20% of companies organise training processes internally; d) training tends to be more pervasive and to involve the greatest number of employees in the company's operational nucleus. These investments are however more intensive among technical and management staff; e) training is a management tool of the "internal" labour market, intended to accompany "micro-organisational" change. Thanks to the availability of longitudinal data (Isfol-INDACO and Bureau van Dijck-AIDA), the research was also able to look at the relationship between training and productivity. It again emerged that companies' performance and levels of investment in training are positively linked, although it is difficult to understand the direction of the causality: it is not clear if it is training that improves company performance or it is companies with better productivity and profitability that invest more in training. However, some correlation analyses show that: a) good performance seems to be associated with an increase in investment in training in subsequent years; b) companies that have not held any training activities have lower productivity and profitability per employee than the rest of the sample.

In imperfect labour markets, in which productivity increases are not completely reflected in wages, workers do not have sufficient incentive to invest in training, while companies enjoy a

¹³ INDACO-Enterprises (INDACO-Imprese, Indagine sulla conoscenza nelle imprese - Survey on knowledge in companies), carried out by ISFOL, looks at the training strategies and behaviour of large companies, SMEs and micro-enterprises. The survey is complementary to Eurostat's CVTS (Continuing Vocational Training Survey), follows the same methodology and constitutes an extra survey to it (for the sample of micro-enterprises). Compared to previous sources, this is totally focused on training in enterprises.

profit margin deriving from the difference between the wage rate and productivity. If firms have not covered training costs, the margin may generate a net gain. Public policies may provide incentives to investment in training benefiting employees through subsidies to companies or individuals, financed through taxes on profit or wages. To assess the effectiveness of the policy mechanism of Interprofessional Funds, an ex-ante analysis (Croce, 2005b) was carried out on the effectiveness of different ways of subsidising companies to promote investment in continuing training. Developing a model covering two sectors and two times periods (Stevens, 1999), the author concludes that the subsidy financed with taxes on workers' wages was ineffective in increasing the level of training in an imperfect market. Theoretically, the author expresses strong doubts with regard to the effectiveness of Interprofessional Funds financed by taxes on wages.

Another study (Brunello and De Paola, 2008) was based on a sample of approximately 1,000 Italian manufacturing companies (Survey of Italian Manufacturing - Indagine sulle Imprese Manifatturiere, conducted by Mediocredito Centrale), according to which economic density (measured as the number of employees per square kilometre at local level) seems to reduce company training. Using a search and matching model to explore the economic relationship between training and economic conditions at provincial level, it identified two seemingly contrasting aspects: on the one hand, the complementarity between knowledge spillovers¹⁴ at local level and training generates a positive correlation between training and local density. On the other hand, higher turnover and wages in areas of greater density reduce training. The empirical analysis highlights the prevalence of this latter aspect, showing that training has a lower incidence in provinces with higher economic density.

Another study (Croce and Ghignoni, 2009), which explored the relationship between local human capital and training, was conducted based on analyses of studies on agglomeration and social returns to education and training, and stresses the contribution of local knowledge spillovers to productivity and wage growth. This paper demonstrates that company-financed training is more frequent on local labour markets with a higher overall level of human capital in terms of education levels.

The potential benefits of training have also been examined from a more theoretical angle (Croce, 2005a), through an analysis of some of the features of Italy's training system, in light of the most recent developments in the economic theory of training and a comparison with the other main national training models. The paper stresses the importance of analysing factors determining investment in training not exclusively limited to the costs of and benefits to individual workers and companies, as it is not certain that once the investment has been made, the benefits can actually be attained. For this to happen, the production system needs to be able to make use of the accumulated human capital.

2.2 Innovativeness

¹⁴ See Acemoglu, 2002; Anselin *et al.* 1997; Bassanini *et al.*, 2005; Brunello and Gambarotto, 2004; Ciccone and Cingano, 2003; Glaeser and Mare, 2001; Jaffe *et al.* 1993; Moretti, 2004.

A study conducted on Isfol INDACO-Enterprises (Gubitta, 2007) data, mainly focused on SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises, with 10-249 employees), confirms that innovation and training are often two sides of the same coin: the introduction of innovative processes does not in fact automatically translate into increases in labour productivity and greater efficiency in operating processes. The survey shows that the more widespread innovation is, the more pervasive are the changes. Continuing training of workers, therefore, is the necessary result of innovative processes. The definition of a synthetic innovation index (SII) and measurements of the extent of training have enabled the relationship between the two phenomena to be measured, and have revealed the impact of competitive pressure (approximated by the proportion of exports out of total sales) and the firm's degree of managerialisation (approximated by the number of managers and directors out of the total headcount) on innovation and training decisions and the link between them. The propensity for innovation (propensity, relative breadth, pervasiveness) is positively correlated and in a statistically significant way with the breadth of training methods used by the company: firms that have implemented wider innovative processes have also used a greater portfolio of training methods. The study showed a positive and statistically significant correlation with the overall number of people involved, also more than once, in training processes out of the total headcount; furthermore, companies that adopt a wide portfolio of training instruments (both structured and informal) are those that more frequently link training and innovation; in these firms, training often pulls innovation, in the sense that it anticipates innovative processes.

Also in micro-enterprises, the introduction of technological innovations may go hand in hand with those of an organisational nature; this is highlighted by a qualitative study, which looked at the introduction of a combination of innovations, particularly in commerce (as for example services to customers mixed with new product management system or with e-commerce network creation (AFI-IPL, 2008).

Another study (Paolucci and Neirotti, 2007), again based on Isfol INDACO-Enterprises data, analysed the ways in which large Italian companies (with 250 employees or more) organise their investments in training, showing how levels of investment in non-homogenous activities are linked to organisational solutions marked by a high degree of internalisation and control of the more strategic phases of the training process. Only around 23% of the total number of firms analysed fully internalise planning and control competencies when organising training. In these companies, human capital is more important in production processes, and investment in training tends to be higher. The capacity to control the training process internally therefore goes a long way to explaining the different investment levels in these activities, and the frequency of investments made by companies in the skills that have a greater impact on their competitiveness. The analyses carried out show that, as well as often being subject to limited spending, training in Italian firms is often directed at areas with a marginal impact on company competitiveness. From these results, the authors draw some conclusions on the determinants at the root of decisions to organise the training process internally and their effectiveness. Companies that invest more in training or that more frequently train their employees on issues highly specific to their business internalise the planning of measures and the monitoring of results of training, thereby minimising transaction costs with external

suppliers and all the typical problems inherent in relations between customer and supplier. Companies that internalise training planning and control of training also seem to be those where access to training, being wider, is open to all categories of workers and where risks of a divide between qualified and less qualified staff are lower. The firm's capacity to internalise and formalise training control may also bring further benefits to its workers. This approach may contribute to the creation of an "internal market" of training, which is combined with personnel management policies that consider skills possessed as a key element in career path. Internalising training organisation competencies may lead companies to use both personnel training and recourse to the external labour market to manage its portfolio of skills. Contrary to the prevailing opinion in studies concerning the existence of a relationship of substitutability between these two solutions, the evidence obtained shows that this is not the case in companies that organise training internally, which stand out for their complementary use of the make and buy options for competencies. The overall evidence obtained in this study suggests to the authors that in investment in training, not only are the amounts allocated of strategic importance, but also the degree to which the company internalises the competencies necessary to organise and control these investments.

A largely methodological study (Formez, 2007) analysed the conditions necessary to stimulate the use of training impact evaluations on Italian public administrations. Currently only 34% of these administrations use this type of evaluation. The study drew up a model, tested in 69 administrations across Italy. The evaluation model allows for the possibility of self-analysing the impact on individuals (in terms of applying what they learnt to their working activities and their work performance), on the organisation (change in operating mechanisms, procedures and structures) and on products and services (creation of new services, improvements in product and service quality).

Another methodological study (Martini, 2006) summarises the main methods for evaluating the effects of policies, from the counterfactual approach to the experimental method, from spatial-temporal comparisons with non-experimental data to regression and statistical matching, to methods based on discontinuity in treatment. There are also some applications to the Italian case, but these do not concern studies on the effects of training.

2.3 Profitability

An econometric analysis (Angotti and D'Elia, 2009) conducted on data from the Isfol INDACO-Enterprises survey on firms' know-how shows how training can drive company profitability, even in the short term: according to this analysis, companies that invest in training on average register better performances in terms of ROI (Return On Investment). The role of training is even greater if it is part of an organic company development project, based on the introduction of technological and organisational innovation, and a mix of qualitatively diverse actions, mainly geared towards specialist content. To guarantee an immediate return for companies, training must be directed at certain specific content: "general" training has much more limited effects than specialist training. It is therefore a good idea to strengthen initiatives on these transversal themes, which, as they do not guarantee an immediate return, companies could overlook. The role of public policies is in this sense crucial, in that a major

investment in transversal skills would produce positive effects also in terms of lifelong learning for employed adults. The return to investment in training seems however discontinuous: many companies could therefore be pulled into a kind of “training trap”, in which profitability falls if investment in training is only marginally increased, and increases if it is reduced.

As well as training quantity and quality, company profitability seems to be heavily influenced by its variety: the various training measures seem to strengthen each other and the combination of several training measures on different topics tends to strengthen their impact on company profitability. It is not just the purpose and variety of training measures that influence company profitability, but also the source of financing, limited to companies that have received financial support to implement it. In fact, training financed by public money seems to have a positive effect on the performance of firms that have the opportunity to obtain funding, with much more significant effects for processes financed pursuant to Italian law 236/93 compared to other sources of funding available for training in companies (European Social Fund¹⁵ and Interprofessional Funds). The firms that do not use a source of funding for their courses tend to register worse performances in terms of profitability.

According to the INDACO survey, training has a very different effect on profitability depending on the degree of innovation of the companies in which they are undertaken. In innovative companies, training increases the probability of maintaining or increasing the performance, while less innovative companies, it seems even to reduce profitability. In particular, in less dynamic companies, professional refresher courses increase the probability of a drop in profitability from 45% to over 60%. This result seems to confirm that training may only drive individual company performance and development, even in the short term, if placed within an organic programme of innovation concerning products and processes. In the contrary case, training tends to weigh on costs and take resources away from current production. We should however bear in mind that either the propensity to innovation or formal or informal training tends to be influenced by company size and the sector in which it operates.. However, adhering to certain conditions that favour the generation of innovative processes within the company (for example, companies’ capacity to integrate internal and external knowledge and to incorporate this into operating processes, products and services) and increase the probability of generating new know-how ensures that training produces predominantly positive effects. Analysis utilising ordered probit models confirms the previous results: in particular the model confirms the comparatively better productivity of training measures financed pursuant to Italian law 236/93 of Interprofessional Funds.

A recent Isfol study (Ricci, 2008) reviewed some empirical contributions on the issue of returns to training for workers and companies in the US and Europe, exploring the methodological aspects rather than the results, and analysing to this end some of the econometric models most used in applied studies and the relative evaluation techniques (counterfactual models, matching methods, regression estimators with control functions,

¹⁵ The ESF funding look sometimes less efficient than National funds for several reasons, one of these is the excessive bureaucracy requested for applying , making them less attractive for enterprises.

classic instrumental variable estimators, regression-discontinuity analyses, difference in difference estimations).

3. Outcomes of Life Long Learning for individuals

Training can produce various type of returns for individuals: for young people (and inactive people in general) it makes finding a first job easier; for unemployed workers, it helps shorten unemployment duration; for employed people, it represents an implicit form of insurance against unemployment, favouring greater job stability, workers' potential productivity, wage increases and professional mobility.

Training in the workplace often leads to a problem of worker selection in training processes, which relates to issues of equality and complementarity between education and training. In this connection, it is interesting to look at outcomes in terms of professional mobility, i.e. the capacity of the training to favour an improvement in the worker's professional position within the company (horizontal or vertical mobility) or an opportunity to move within the labour market (external mobility).

Again in this case, we should bear in mind some structural data relating to individuals' participation in training. The Isfol INDACO-Workers¹⁶ survey shows that continuing training today involves an increasing but still insufficient number of workers: employed people who have the opportunity to participate in at least one training activity related to their job amounted to 42.8% of the total in 2008, an increase of more than ten percentage points in four years (32.7% in 2004). The distribution of training opportunities made available by employers is very different between public sector workers, who have a very high participation rate, and other types of worker (employees of private companies or the self-employed), whose participation levels are much lower. Worker participation seems closely linked to professional level (for employees) or the type of profession/trade: it is very high among middle managers, directors and freelancers, very low among general workers, craftsmen and shopkeepers. Participation levels also vary with changes in workers' individual characteristics (also shown by the results of the AES survey) and the type and size of the company they work for, leading to a dispersion of training opportunities that actually creates serious inequalities. Gender gaps re-emerge, after having seemed to narrow in previous years (Angotti and Bernardini 2009).

In the sections below, we consider some empirical analyses conducted in Italy on individuals, which analysed the employment outcomes of training for young and inactive people (section

¹⁶ INDACO-Workers is a survey on the training behaviour of workers (INDACO-Lavoratori, Indagine sui comportamenti formativi dei lavoratori) conducted by ISFOL from 2001, which looks at the characteristics and trends in demand for training expressed by workers in Italy. The survey gathered both quantitative and qualitative information: the former estimates participation in training activities and differences in training due to demographic (gender, age), cultural (education) and professional factors; the latter allows objectives, limitations and expectations regarding public policies to be identified. Other information concerns: the characteristics and implementation methods of training activities, readiness to contribute financially to the activities through forms of co-investment and evaluations concerning the effectiveness of the training. The survey is complementary to Eurostat's Adult Education Survey (AES) (www.ricercheformazione.it).

3.1), the benefits of co-financed continuing training for the employed (section 3.2) and continuing training in general in relation to professional mobility for the employed (section 3.3).

3.1 Employment outcomes for young and inactive people

This section looks at the results of surveys and evaluations of measures geared towards employability in the ESF (European Social Fund) 2000-2006 programme.

Placement surveys obtained information that allows the employment conditions of training recipients twelve months after course completion to be reconstructed (Severati, 2006). The surveys shows that employability training courses financed by the ESF took on people with lower qualifications than those held by participants on courses financed during the previous programme (1994-1999). This represents a success, as it responds to the equitable objectives of the ESF. However, it does not seem effective in changing the employment opportunities of some people among the weaker target groups whose parents have a low level of education and low professional position. Besides, the effect of qualifications is limited over time, in the sense that holding a degree greatly increases the probability of finding a decent job, but only for the young, while it has no advantage for those already around the age of 35. Qualifications therefore have a value if they are used quickly on the market.

The survey on employment outcomes of employability courses co-financed by the ESF (Severati, 2008a) shows the difficulties of finding a job in Southern Italy: twelve months after course completion, only a fifth of those trained had found a position. It is also shown that participants' expectations of finding a job were seen as being disappointed, not so much for the quality of training provided but for the objective possibilities of finding work in an un-dynamic market. An explanation for the lack of employability may lie in the lack of guidance provided to people being trained by institutions, which have probably not carried out an effective analysis of individual needs. However, the main cause lies in the absence of an economic structure able to accommodate the new workforce in a sustainable manner, so they are faced with the paradox of over-qualification in labour supply, which could cause unemployment rather than new employment. Another paper (Severati, 2008b) provides the methodological framework for surveys on employment outcomes as well as an overview of the limits and potential of the ESF 2000-2006 programme and indications for the 2007-2013 programme.

In general, the works of Isfol confirm that training is a tool that can increase the chances of people involved finding a job, particularly among women. The framework of ESF employability policies for the period 2000-2006 shows that it is predominantly women, young people and those with low qualifications who benefit from financed training; this seems to be in line with the main objectives of ESF (Scipioni, 2009).

To conclude, an estimate of the positive impact of training and education on the probability of finding a job was carried out by a study (Baici and Casalone, 2007) that used Isfol data (survey on 21-year olds and 31-year olds) and non-parametric (propensity score matching

estimator) and parametric (control function estimator) methodologies. Training programmes with a longer duration have a more positive impact.

3.2 Outcomes of training for the employed, with particular reference to co-financed training

The evaluation of ESF aimed at the employed (De Lellis, 2008; Isfol, 2007) highlights how training co-financed does not seem to have given positive outcomes, whether in terms of career progression, duties assigned, decision-making autonomy or contractual stability. Moreover greater probability of being trained and lower probability of changing jobs correspond to greater seniority of service. This evidence is a sign of the strong selection process undertaken by companies of workers to be trained, a process that operates to the advantage of people with greater decision-making power (and a higher level of qualifications). Adaptability to markets and technologies requires the company to make selective choices to the detriment of workers whose training is less immediately useful and profitable for the firm. The training of all operative levels will probably only become necessary at a subsequent stage, with the adoption of different production technology. The problem remains of how to protect the employability of weak workers.

In this regard, it was observed that these objectives of equality not met with the ESF¹⁷ are, paradoxically, obtained through the implementation of training plans financed pursuant to Italian law 236/1993. While this law was originally imbalanced in favour of company objectives regarding competitiveness rather than equality, it has over time become increasingly geared towards guaranteeing the training requirements of weak workers (Ministry of Employment-Isfol, 2006).

If the ESF has not produced the desired effects in terms of reducing training selectivity, one study (Croce, 2005b) sounds a warning concerning the possible outcomes produced by Interprofessional Funds, which risk further increasing the differences between the worker categories that benefit most from training and those that benefit the least.

Also worthy of note are two studies on the issue of worker selection for training: one studies the selection criteria adopted by Italian companies to choose which workers to train (Croce and Tancioni, 2007), the other explores the role of public policies (Croce and Montanino, 2006).

One study (Cantalupi *et al.*, 2004; Cantalupi and Carta, 2004) conducted through the analysis of data collected from ESF administrative archives and a sample survey, showed that on average, men with higher levels of education and highly-skilled employed people with an established professional career and belonging to middle age categories receive more training.

¹⁷ The ESF has to date favoured strong use by age and qualification, thereby helping to create segmentation in the labour market with regard to access to training, which could fuel further discrimination in the future (Isfol, 2007).

Older workers, immigrants and flexible workers find it more difficult to gain access to this type of training.

In this connection, some studies (Bernardini, 2009; Angotti *et al.*, 2007) show a decline in participation levels among the over 55s. This reduction is more accentuated in the public sector, probably due to the lower motivation of older workers to taking part in training not linked to the achievement of “vital” objectives (for example, keeping their job), unlike what occurs in the private sector. The figures also confirm a positive relationship between education level and the proportion of trained people, meaning that training is more often used to develop the skills of those with a good education rather than helping to boost those of employees with less education. Education represents a clear discriminatory factor in access to training, with a similar trend within each professional category: very low levels of participation among workers who only completed compulsory education contrast with very high levels among graduates. If access to continuing training is linked to workers’ education levels, these are in turn strongly bound to the schooling of their family of origin. This could feed a vicious circle, which could further widen gaps rather than narrow them.

3.3 Benefits in terms of professional mobility

A recent study (Belmonte, 2009) analyses the results of the Isfol INDACO-Workers survey in relation to the benefit expected/attained from training, exploring the issue of professional mobility. The usefulness of training seems to be strongly grounded in prospects perceived by workers in terms of advantages for professional mobility, both at the level of benefit expected by the worker and actual benefit. The results show a strong relationship between professional mobility and training: 18.4% of workers who attended training courses in 2008 said that they obtained immediate benefits in terms of professional mobility. The figures also show strong potential demand for training from workers, both among employees (in the public and private sectors) and the self-employed. However, there is a big gap between expected and actual benefits of training; this gap is due to the ways in which the worlds of training and work are connected in terms of skills development and recognition, career paths and the capacity of the production system to absorb the rise in human capital.

In this connection, an analysis conducted on the results of the previous findings of the INDACO-Workers survey (Angotti *et al.*, 2007) showed that among workers aged over 55, training seems to produce “secondary” benefits (increase in job motivation, better management of their work and in general an improvement in the company atmosphere) as opposed to “primary” benefits (improvement in professional position, higher remuneration). In any case, two workers out of three call for institutions to finance training for the over 50s with a view to retaining their jobs.

Some evidence regarding the importance of training to improvements in professional position appear in an empirical study (Nacamulli, 2006), which finds these benefits particularly in companies with more than 500 workers. Nevertheless, the acquisition of skills that have enabled career development is firstly attributed to learning from experience, the direct observation of colleagues and their help. However, the value recognised to explicit training

experiences increases with the rise in training investment. Furthermore, the analysis of the impact of training on career stresses the importance of the concept of training in its wider sense: career appears to be influenced both by explicit training courses and social learning activities, which vary according to sector and occupation.

4. Conclusions

As regards the effects of training on company performance, all studies show that in Italy, training has a positive impact on productivity, while its effect on wages is more debatable. However, in most companies, training is organised in ways not able to guarantee an increase in company competitiveness. The relationship between investment in training and company performance is therefore positive, but it is not always clear to what extent training favours an improvement in company performance. Other studies report a lower incidence of training in areas of higher economic density, and that company training is more frequent in local labour markets in which aggregate human capital is higher in terms of education level. It is therefore necessary to mention that, besides the fact that training outcomes are clear to many enterprises, only the 32% of Italian enterprises offer steadily training opportunities to their employers, while the European average is around 60%. This is due to many factors and obstacles, both cultural (small enterprises prefer learning by doing to structured courses, even if this does not provide a recognition of the competences acquired) and economic-organizational (high cost of training, fragmented offer, etc.).

A strong relationship was also found between training and propensity for innovation, particularly in the presence of a varied mix of training methods used. The degree of internalisation and control of the most strategic phases of the training process seems to have a particular influence on investment levels.

There is a strong link between investment in training and growth in company profitability, even in the short term. The contribution of training increases if it forms part of an organic company development project, based on the introduction of technological and organisational innovation, and on a mix of different measures with specialist content. Training has a very different effect on company profitability depending on the degree of innovation of the company providing it.

Concerning the effects of support policies, various studies express serious doubts regarding the effectiveness of Interprofessional Funds: on the one hand, subsidies financed by taxes on employees' incomes does not seem to be effective at increasing training levels in an imperfect market; on the other, Interprofessional Funds show comparatively lower productivity and effectiveness in terms of their effect on company profitability in the short term, compared to other funds (law 236/93, ESF).

As regards outcomes of LLL for individuals, training generally seems to increase the chances of finding employment for individuals involved by public policies, particularly among women. However, training is not sufficiently effective in changing the original employment possibilities of weaker target users. In general, qualifications are valuable if used quickly on the market. Studies confirm the presence of horizontal segregation for women.

The situation is somewhat different for employed people. Companies carefully select workers for training, a situation that works to the advantage of staff with greater executive power, greater seniority of service and higher qualifications. Training co-financed by the ESF does not produce positive results whether in terms of career progression, duties allocated, decision-making autonomy or contractual stability. There remains the problem of how to protect the employability of weak workers. In this sense, Interprofessional Funds, around which there was significant expectation, do not seem to produce significant effects, thereby threatening to further widen the gap between categories of workers who benefit the most from training and those who gain little benefit.

In company training in general (financed and non-financed), there is even stronger selection of participants in courses, with a drop in the last few years in the participation rate of the over 55s, which is more marked in the public sector. A positive relationship between the level of education and the proportion of trained people is also evident, meaning that training is more often used to develop the skills of those with a good education rather than helping to boost those of employees with less education, which could further widen gaps rather than narrow them.

Unlike the results that emerged from an analysis of financed training, with regard to company training, the results are generally positive in terms of professional mobility, with a strong potential demand for training among workers, but a large gap between expected and actual benefits. In particular, among workers aged over 55, training seems mainly to produce secondary rather than primary benefits. Finally, career seems influenced not just by explicit training processes but also by social learning activities.

The studies and research here examined insert sometimes in studies already explored at international level and sometimes try to respond to specific national problems, first of all the low incidence of enterprises available to invest in human capital. The current political debate in Italy rarely makes use the results of scientific research or statistical data balanced at European level. Probably, in the following months it will increase the need of knowledge in these issues, with a particular focus on the role of enterprise as a place for learning, interaction between work, training and education, besides the transition and integration processes. Thenceforth the conclusions provided by this report could offer a determining contribution, provided that it will also be developed a context more favorable for the development of research than the present one.

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Theme 2: VET and employment-related mobility and migration¹⁸

Abstract

The following report aims at providing main research studies that have been published in the period 2004-2009 concerning VET and employment-related mobility and migration in the specific Italian socio-economic and political context. Section 1 examines main aspects and characteristics of foreign immigration to Italy, investigating the level of education and training of immigrants also in relation to the Italian labour market and socio-economic changes also underlining the importance of the educational attainment of the second generations of migrants. Research in the last few years has also investigated Italian immigration flows abroad with a particular focus on the new migration of the highly skilled (section 2) and internal migration (section 3). From this viewpoint, Italy is placed within a very particular context: like within Europe, where a difference can be identified between northern and Mediterranean countries, in Italy there is a profound territorial dualism between the northern and southern regions. Migratory movements (the range and direction of flows, but also their composition and quality) also reflect this dualism. Research also looked at the analysis of geographical mobility for students and the impact of European mobility programmes in the Italian context.

Key findings

Migration has characterised the social and economic development of Italy since the end of the 19th century; In this framework, the Italian case is placed within the overall evolution of European migration and the formation of a European-wide migration system. This involves examining the more complex processes, like that of the integration of immigrants into their host society and their political and social impact. In particular, the research investigates the inter-relationships between demographic changes in the Italian population, the transformation of the welfare system and the entry of immigrants into the employment system, also determining how and whether their education level could influence their participation to the labour market. As for external migration, the number of highly-skilled migration is increasing, thus stressing the lack of challenges and opportunities for Italian researchers in Italy. Moreover, internal migration, which has seen thick flows of workers from the south to the north, especially in the years between 1955 and 1975, has seemed to grow again in the last few years.

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1. Migratory flows in Italy

Over the last decade, immigration in Italy has undertaken significant change, dividing and diversifying also in its relationship with work culture and organisation.

From a “traditional” country of emigration, Italy has undergone a transformation in the last 15 years to become one of the most popular destinations for migratory flows coming from – in order – eastern Europe (“countries in transition”), Africa (the Maghreb and countries of the Gulf of Guinea), Asia (China, the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka) and Latin America (Peru and Ecuador in particular). According to ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics), after an annual increase of approximately half a million, at the start of 2008, foreign residents in Italy totalled almost 3,433,000, including citizens from other EU member states. Caritas and Migrantes (Caritas, 2009) estimate a higher number of legal immigrants fluctuating between 3,800,000 and 4,000,000, out of a total population of 59,619,290, equivalent to 6.7% (slightly above the EU average, which was 6% in 2006). On the 1st of January 2009, foreign residents coming from EU countries represent the 53,6% (predominance of rumenians with 20,5% and albanians with 11,5%). A consistent increase of foreign work force has also been due to the entrance of Romania and Bulgaria in European Union, thus contributing to decrease the incidence of undeclared work (Censis, 2008).

The fourteenth report on migration, recently published by the ISMU - Foundation for initiatives and studies on multi-ethnicity - provided updated estimates on the presence of foreigners in Italy, putting the number on 1 January 2008 at 4,328,000, of which 3,677,000 were staying in the country legally, and in 93% of cases relating to individuals registered with the authorities (Blangiardo, 2009). The report also considers some important signs of stabilization and “maturity” shown by the migration phenomenon in the last few years, referring to the gradual change from employment immigration to “population” in a demographic sense, thus including immigrants in the demographic dynamics of the country. Based on the first report on immigrants in Italy (Ministry of the Interior, 2008), approximately two thirds of foreign immigration is concentrated in the north, a quarter in the centre and just over 10% in the south. Foreigners seem to have higher employment rates than Italians. This may be because they follow a similar distribution pattern to Italians by gender, but the breakdown by age of individuals of working age (15-64 years old) is very different. The immigrant population is heavily concentrated in the central 25-44 years old age category, with a low proportion of people belonging to the older age group. However, analysis of demographic dynamics for foreign population (Blangiardo and Rimoldi, 2006) underlines the existence of population ageing process also for migrants, thus leading to structural transformations relevant at economic and social level.

Foreigners’ employment rates are also higher than those of Italians in the same age categories: by almost eight percentage points for the population aged up to 34 years old, and approximately three points for the 35-54 year olds. This means that foreigners have a greater capacity to find employment, largely due to their greater acceptance to take on all kinds of work. The employment rate of foreigners is higher in the north-east (69%), followed by the north-west (68%) and the centre (67.7%) and lower in the south (61%). Foreigners are

generally single, have lower qualifications and mainly live in the richer areas of the country. Gender differences are significant: a man is four times more likely to be employed than a woman, as showed in the table below.

Table 1 Activity, Employment and unemployment rates (%) of foreigners for gender - Years 2005-2008 (Source: Istat)

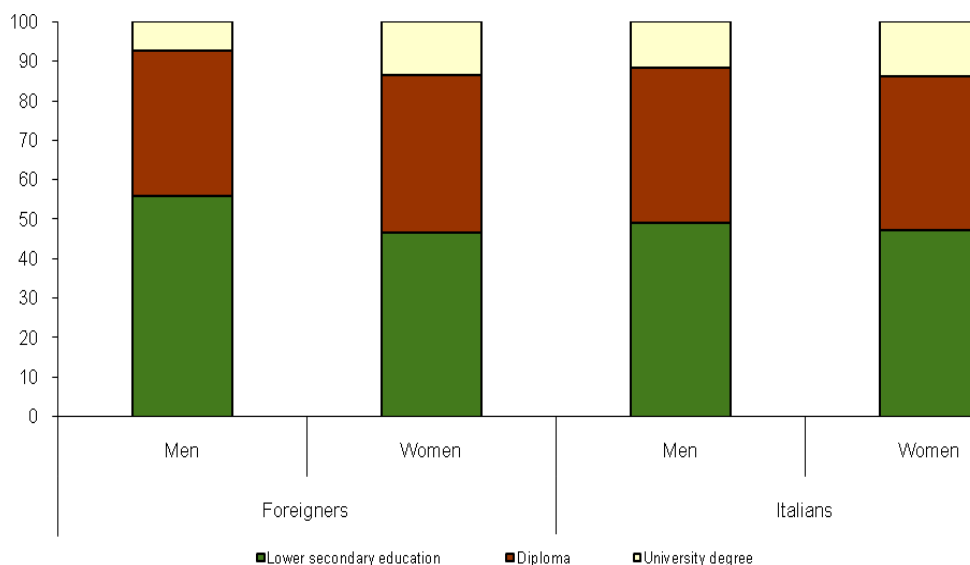
YEARS	Activity rate (15-64 years)		Employment rate (15-64 years)		Unemployment rate (15-64 years)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2005	87,5	58,0	81,5	49,1	6,8	15,3
2006	89,0	58,6	84,2	50,7	5,4	13,4
2007	87,9	58,7	83,3	51,3	5,3	12,7
2008	87,1	59,9	81,9	52,8	6,0	11,9

Greater work opportunities also emerge for people in the more adult age category, resident in the north, with higher qualifications, who live in a single-person household or have a parental role.

1.1 Education and training of immigrants and the labour market

Study and research papers have investigated the level of education and training of immigrants with respect to the duties they perform and in relation to the Italian labour market (figure 1). One fact clearly emerges from both the Caritas-Migrantes report (Caritas, 2009) and the Ministry for the Interior's report on immigration: foreign workers have a fairly high level of education. Approximately five out of ten foreign workers has a qualification at least equal to a diploma; the corresponding proportion among Italians is six out of ten. Differences in education levels between Italians and foreigners are not therefore significant. Around half of foreign workers, therefore, have an upper secondary school or university qualification. Much of the remaining number has a lower secondary school certificate. However, as showed, the factor assuring higher employment rates for foreigners is not the qualification level, but the length of their stay in Italy. Moreover, the gap between male and female employment rates in Italy narrows for foreign citizens as their level of education increases, but never falls below twenty percentage points, and is almost forty percentage points in the case of those with lower qualifications.

Figure 1 Italian and foreigner population percentage (15-64 years) for education level and gender - Year 2008 (Source Istat)



However, qualifications do not work for immigrants in the same way as they do for Italians (Reyneri, 2007). For example, unemployment decreases with the increase of higher qualifications, but if we take into account the effect of other factors (gender, country of origin), this relationship loses its importance. Research analyses also show that the relationship between employment and education levels is not linear, underlining the importance of their length of stay as a crucial factor for guaranteeing their employment. Foreigners' employment rate, which stands at 28.9% for those in Italy less than three years, rises to 57.0% for those in Italy from at least three to four years, 70.1% for those in the country between five and nine years and 75.6% for those that have been in Italy for ten years or more. The situation is however more critical for women, who need a longer stay in Italy to be able to find employment.

The length of stay has been correlated with the incidence of over education among immigrant male employees in the Italian labour market, trying in particular to test whether it changes with years of permanence in the host country (Dell'Aringa and Pagani 2009). To perform the analysis, authors used data from the Istat Labour Force Survey (LFS) for the years 2005-2007, showing that immigrants, especially those from Eastern Europe, suffer much more than Italian workers from over education and underlining that the length of stay in the host country, when sufficiently extended (more than 10 years), is related to better matches in terms of a reduction in the incidence of over education, we find a stronger positive effect of length of stay on the incidence of over education.

A recent study (Barone and Mocetti, 2009) on low-skilled immigration and female labour supply examine whether and how the inflows of female immigrants “specialized” in household production has changed the labour supply of Italian women. The authors find that a higher concentrations of immigrants who provide (informal) domestic services lead to high-educated women to spend more time at work. A similar effect is not found for other skill groups. The impact is stronger for self-employed women who are presumably more able to adjust at the margin their labour supply. The effect of immigration varies also depending on the presence of children and/or elderly persons at home. According to the authors, the availability of immigrants specialized in those services impact on time allocation of women, favouring an increase of the time devoted to work and, more presumably, to advance in their careers. This is especially true for high-educated women whereas the impact on low-educated natives is low or null. Moreover, the increasing presence of immigrant workers has also allowed a higher percentage of italians to access to more qualified jobs, thus contributing to make less difficult the entrance in the labor market for many young and qualified people.

In this reference framework, Reyneri (Reyneri, 2006) formulates some observations on the correlation between immigrants’ education levels and employment rate, showing that immigrants are largely concentrated in manual jobs (almost 78% of non eu citizens working as cleaners, road sweepers, domestic helper, unskilled workers in building sector, kitchen and restaurant assistants, agriculture workers), while Italians have a substantially greater presence in non-manual, more highly-skilled jobs (more than 36% of people).

However, the segregation of immigrant workers at the lower levels of the employment hierarchy is not matched by a lack of education, as more than 35% declare that they have an upper secondary school diploma and almost 8% a university degree. Therefore, even among the most educated, very few manage to work in highly-skilled jobs, and they are enormously disadvantaged compared to Italians with the same qualification levels. Only a quarter of immigrants with a university degree are employed in intellectual or technical professions, compared to almost 90% of Italians possessing a degree, while more than half have manual jobs, compared to just over 1% of Italians. Among immigrants with an upper secondary school diploma, 40% of men and more than 53% of women carry out low-skilled manual work, compared with 14% of Italian men and 7% of Italian women. In this direction, it is also worth of mentioning a research study on the Labour market effects of immigration into Italy (Venturini and Villosio, 2006) where the authors seek to determine how immigration affects the employment and unemployment of nationals in Italy. To this end, they apply a probit model to measure the extent to which the presence of migrant workers affects the probability that national workers will find jobs or lose the ones they have. Particular methodological problems are resolved by applying the model to homogeneous areas defined either by regions or by regions and sectors. The results show that, except during specific periods, migrant labour has a complementary rather than a competitive effect on the labor market. Similar conclusions may be drawn from an Isfol study on the role covered by Employment Services Centres in helping migrants to find a job (Baronio, 2007). The study constructs a broad framework of the reality of immigrant workers in Italy, identifying aspects that, although they relate to specific territorial areas, allow us to formulate some considerations that can also be extended to situations other than those of the large urban centres analysed. An ambivalent integration model therefore emerges, which on the one hand indicates a gradual and laborious

process of integration, often entrusted merely to individual efforts and capacities, but nevertheless in progress, and on the other, reveals the difficulties of emancipation and professional development of a significant and steadily rising component of the workforce, which our production system makes systematic use of. Immigrant workers are used to cover sectors or areas of production left free by the native-born people, and are used in those less open to technological innovation and restructuring, often operating within illegal or semi-legal contractual systems. The quality of work available represents the real discriminating element between Italian citizens and immigrants (among the latter, one out of two people interviewed considers the work they perform to be below their capabilities). With a medium to high level of education, foreign workers can almost solely gain access to low-skilled or unskilled work, often significantly worse than their working experiences in their home country. This often results in the immigrant workforce being trapped by stereotypes, which make it difficult for them to use the training and employment capital they have accumulated. Furthermore, a question that very often arises, and is also heard by job centre staff, relates to the recognition of qualifications gained abroad, restricted by classifications considered too rigid and subject to long and complex procedures. In this sense, job offers for immigrants are poorly influenced by the qualifications obtained in their country of origins, mainly due to the low percentage of qualifications that are officially recognized in Italy (Isfol, 2009).

This strongly limits the possibility of “maintaining” the skills acquired, both in terms of possibilities of access to continuing training (also linked to the qualifications held), and the process of honing skills on the job. At the same time, those interviewed expressed the desire to acquire more specific skills, and in particular ones that are recognised, with a view to increasing what they have to offer on the job market and giving them greater specialisation.

The processing of OECD data (OECD, 2005) clearly shows that the percentage of people with tertiary education among foreigners in Italy (12.2%) is among the lowest in OECD countries, well below the general average (23.2%) and that of European countries (18.6%). This fact can be attributed to the absence of restrictive and selective policies on immigration. Italy has not adopted any programmes that facilitate the entry of highly-skilled workers, and as a result, most immigrants in Italy are unqualified (Brandi 2004b).

Occupation and sector distribution of immigrants is not markedly different by educational level, contrarily to what happens for natives (Mocetti and Porello 2009). Four immigrants out of five are blue-collar workers; they work in the industry and construction sectors and usually take jobs avoided by natives (e.g. low paid household and other service jobs). Moreover, they are usually employed in occupations that are lower ranked, in terms of skill content and wages, than native born workers with the same level of education.

As for wage dynamics, the difference among migrants and natives salaries is not so consistent as it might be thought (Brandolini et al., 2005); microeconomics evidence confirm that local and migrants workforce are complementary and not in opposition.

Regarding the participation of immigrants in vocational training courses, some research studies underline the criticalities of the activities realized in this area of active labour market policies (Zincone 2003); still in the last years, the Italian situation offers an inconsistent framework for vocational training of immigrants, mainly characterized by lack of planning, fragmentation of the offer, financial uncertainties and few (only in some Regions) interaction between training bodies, public administrations and regional authorities. According to Italian legislation, in order to promote the integration in the Italian community of immigrant workers and their families, Regions can promote language and Italian language courses also supporting the participation of immigrant workers to training and job insertion courses.

Research studies conducted show a low participation to the courses activated, several cases of abandon and a difficult connection with the labor market and enterprises. According to Isfol data, during 2007, the percentage of adult immigrants (age group 25-64) participating to training activities was just 2,9%; during 2005-2006 the participation to training courses for immigrants was 486 students on 6780 while the total number of activities addressed to foreign citizens during ESF 2000-2006 was 355.973 (5,9% of the total). Although some initiatives have been taken at regional level, they cannot provide a coherent framework and data of immigrants participation to vocational training.

Immigrants attending different courses organized by Territorial Permanent Centre, have been around 180.000 in the school year 2005/2006, on a total of 500.000 participants, with a strong prevail of attendance in the North of Italy and a significant female presence. Among them there are also many young over 16; for them there are provided accompanying measures to promote the participation of VET courses provided by schools or vocational training centre. This last aspect recalls the need of synergic actions in the integration process between the education and training system also to avoid the risk of a premature social selection.

1.2 The integration of the “Second generation” of immigrants in the Italian education system

The rapid growth of migrations for Italy has also enlarged the attention of scholars and policy makers from immigrants to their families, and in particular to the formation processes and the characteristics of the “second generations” – native youth or adolescents migrated at very young ages. (Casacchia et al., 2008).

Statistics and data on education are also useful indicators that, opportunely monitored, can provide knowledge not only on the integration of immigrants population, but also on their improvement in the social life. In the complex process of integration a key role is played by the education level of children of immigrants, starting point for the success in the labour market and accumulation of human capital. In this sense, the analysis of the school level of the “second generations” constitutes an important focus points for evaluating the integration process in a wider sense.

The integration process of second generation immigrants is an advisable goal of social policy and a stimulating research issue, as in the next future they will represent a significant, consistent and productive work force. At the beginning of 2007 the number of children who were born to immigrants in Italy is close to 400 thousand. This rapid growth of the second generation meant a profound modification in the educational system. In fact, the population in school with non-Italian nationality passed from 70 thousand in the 1997 to over 500 thousand in the 2007. In the same period the percentage of foreigners in school increased from 0.8% to 5.8%.

The percentage of foreign students in the Italian school system is unbalanced toward the Northern and Central regions: in particular, one student above 8 is foreigner in 6 North-Central regions (Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Marche), while this quota is 1 above 100 in all Southern and Insular regions (Ministry of Education, 2006). This is also due to the different occupational opportunities that adults get in these areas.

According to the data from the Italian Ministry of Education, foreign students appears to be more vulnerable than natives in the educational system. They are, in fact, more likely to achieve lower scholastic outcomes, higher dropout rates and lower levels of school attainment. According to the Ministry of Education, in school year 2006-2007, in upper secondary school the percentage of successful students was 72% for foreigners and 86% for italians, while in lower secondary school was 91% for foreigners against 97% for natives. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Moreover, there is an increase in the number of students for upper secondary school, with a strong prevail for technical and professional institutes: around 100.000 for the school year 2008-2009, of which 80.000 enrolled in technical and professional institutes.

Immigrants in school are often observed to differ in performances and attainment: a research study carried out by Barban and White (Barban and White, 2009) focalizes on a specific point of time of the educational career of a student: the passage from primary school to the secondary school. Statistics¹⁹ show that immigrant youths have a higher possibility to choose vocational schools compared to natives. In fact, the incidence of foreign students at the first year of secondary school (9th grade) is 11% in the vocational school versus 3% in the high schools. The importance of focusing on the typology of secondary school is motivated for two reason: first, the choice of the school influences the future educational attainments of the students and, in the case of vocational, it prevents the access to college education; second, the higher incidence of foreign student in the vocational schools might be a signal of segregation in the school system. (Barban and White 2009). Preliminary results show that recent

¹⁹ Data were drawn from ITAGEN2, a survey of students attending Middle school living in Italy that begins during the 2005-2006 school year. ITAGEN2 is the first nation-wide extensive survey on children with ITAGEN2 is the first nation-wide extensive survey on children with at least one foreign parent, and focuses on the determinants of social integration.

immigrants have lower probability to enrol in high school even if they had the same results of their Italian schoolmate, so being disadvantaged (in the sense of opportunity of continuing their education) in the Italian school system with respect to their Italian peers. Sometimes, this disadvantage can be caused by factors independent of their ethnic origin; for example their family status and the education level of the immigrant parents. Education level of immigrants is variable but in many cases the lack of a higher education level is an important reason for the school and professional disadvantage of the children (Barban et al. , 2008).

2. External migration and high-skilled migration

Research conducted by Eurispes (research and studies on economic and social issues) in 2005, based on Ministry of the Interior data, put the number of Italians resident abroad at almost four million: specifically, this number breaks down into 1,944,526 households, most of which have moved to other European countries (1,058,998 households). More than half of the Italians (56%) who have left their country come from the southern regions and the islands (Sicily and Sardinia). Main destination for emigrants is Europe (57.7%), although this percentage falls to 43% considering only EU member states. Non-European countries represent the destination for 42.3% of Italian emigrants, approximately 15% less than European countries. With 20%, Germany is the country hosting the largest number of Italians, and is followed in second place by Argentina with 17.5%. The next most popular countries are Switzerland (14.7%) and France (10.2%), followed by Brazil (8.3%), Belgium (7.9%), the US (5.4%), the UK (4.8%), Canada (3.9%), Australia (3.7%) and Venezuela (3.5%).

2.1 High skilled migration and “brain drain”

Alongside “traditional” emigration, research in the last few years has focused on the study of migratory flows that involve the highly skilled, people with tertiary education or a university diploma; in fact, both the number and economic importance of highly-skilled migrations are growing, given that the modern production system must increasingly rapidly incorporate innovations resulting from general scientific and technological development. The international mobility of highly-skilled workers is therefore seen in a very positive light, as it enables the exchange of knowledge and experience; however, this assessment is based on the principle that mobility is reciprocal, i.e. that in theory, outgoing mobility from a given country is replaced by a similar incoming mobility.

The “brain drain” – flows of highly-skilled workers who leave Italy to live and work in another country – has been studied (Beltrame, 2007) with a focus on the trends in flows in terms of size, composition and direction, as well as the political dimension, understood both in terms of measures to manage migration and defining the brain drain problem.

Scholars of high-skilled migration have for a long time complained about the lack of systematic statistical data that would allow them to make estimates of the phenomenon; this issue is very often raised in Italy, where quantitative studies that would allow the size of the brain drain to be measured are in short supply (Avveduto and Brandi, 2004).

Out of the approximately 300,000 highly-skilled Italians who live abroad in OECD countries, 45% are in North America, specifically 32% in the US (that is approximately a third of the total) and 12.6% in Canada. 40% remain in Europe, where their favourite destinations are France (9.3%), the UK (8%), Switzerland (6.9%) and Germany (6.2%). Australia attracts a large number of Italians (13.6% of the total, making it the second most important destination), while Asian countries considered by the OECD (Japan, South Korea and Turkey) attract only 0.6%.

They work mainly in industry (69.6%), a lower percentage than the general (67.2%) and the European (74.6%) averages. The most interesting piece of data is, however, the very high percentage of Italians who work in academia (20.2%) compared to general and European averages of 6.1% and 10.4% respectively. This figure seems to suggest that, within high-skilled migration from Italy to the US, the number of researchers migrating towards the US academic system is very high, and that the Italian brain drain is a phenomenon that concerns university scientific research in particular.

As regards motivation, the issues of wages, career opportunities and job security are indicated as important by Italian researchers (Morano-Foadi and Foadi, 2004). The causes of the brain drain are said to be lack of funding, very low wage levels (compared to many foreign countries), the fact that the criteria used to distribute funds are not meritocratic, and the lack of adequate infrastructure and equipment. Brain drain is seen for the Italian case as a symptom of problems in scientific research, which are due to a lack of investment (both by the state and companies), low wages, favouritism in funds and career management; these problems have a knock-on effect on competitiveness, and the solution to the brain drain problem must lie in increasing funding for research. Brain drain therefore seems to be the result of a chain of problems that weigh on the field of Italian scientific research (Brandi and Segnana, 2008).

Besides the phenomenon of external emigration and brain drain, a lot of attention has been paid to the issue of the “second generation” of emigrants, the children born in the 1970s of Italians belonging to the last wave of migration. Research conducted on behalf of the Agnelli Foundation (Impicciatore, 2005) traced a group of children of Italian immigrants in France, Australia and Switzerland, and produced a series of statistics to assess the influence of the family migration experience on the children’s education. The focus was not to measure the success at school and university of the children of Italian emigrants in absolute terms, but to estimate the difference between their success and that of children of native people in terms of the probability of achieving specific targets in education. In every country, the second generation of Italians coming from the last wave of migration showed a systematically greater propensity to achieve high levels of education compared to the children of people native to the country.

3. Internal migrations mobility and the north-south divide in Italy

Recently, many demographic and social researches have pointed to the revival of internal migration, which played a crucial role in Italy's industrial and socio-economic development.

The southern regions, Calabria, Puglia, Campania and Sicily, experience higher interregional emigration, i.e. “short range” migration, with nearly one in five people leaving to go to a different region (Toscano, 2008) . A very important contribution for understanding internal migration issues has been provided by the Svimez 2008 Report (Svimez, 2008), which put into evidence “a country split into two in terms of migration: a centre-north that attracts and sorts flows internally contrasts with a south that drives out young people and manpower without replacing them with pensioners, foreigners or people from other regions”. In 2008, the South of Italy lost more than 122,000 residents to the central and northern regions, while approximately 60,000 people returned. The number of “excellent” graduates who left rose particularly sharply: in 2004, 25% of southern graduates with the highest grades left; three years later, the percentage jumped to almost 38%. The report also explains that southern graduates that move to the centre-north get less stable contracts than those who remain, but receive higher salaries. Another important phenomenon is that of “long-range” commuters, who live in the south and work in the centre-north or abroad, and return home at weekends or a couple of times a month. These are young people with a medium-high level of education: 80% are under 45, almost 50% are employed in high-level professions, and 24% are graduates. The regions that most attract these commuters are Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Lazio.

Internal migratory flows in Italy related to vocational training and education have been analysed in correlation with the dynamics of transformation affecting contemporary society; from a country of emigration to one of strong immigration, Italy has rapidly changed its face, and has also been affected by the renewed internal movement of its population from southern to central-northern regions, with blue- and white-collar workers looking for better opportunities and standards of living than are possible in their home regions.

The structural evolution of internal migration from the south to the centre-north has been analysed in a paper (Piras and Melis, 2007), which looks at the migratory flows that have characterised, still characterise and presumably will continue to characterise Italy in the next future. The return in the last few years of internal migration and foreign migration, in particular towards Europe and the US, of individuals with high levels of education represents an alarm bell. Various studies have shown that for advanced countries, an increase in human capital is closely tied to economic growth, and Italy, particularly from the mid-1990s, is one of the EU countries to have been most affected by the loss of human capital. Italy has also been and is still affected by significant internal movement, mainly from the south to the centre-north, from the most disadvantaged to the wealthier areas. Again in this case, internal mobility is a very topical issue, particularly in the last few years, in which there has been a sharp decline in the balance of migration to the detriment of southern regions. In the last thirty years, the most important factor has been the change in the structural composition of the migration trend, which shows a significant drop in the propensity to mobility among

individuals with lower levels of schooling, offset by growing emigration among those with higher levels. In fact, as regards movements from the south to the north, individuals with no schooling or lower levels of education show a decreasing migratory trend over time, which can be explained by the fact that they are very likely to belong to older age groups of the population, and are therefore less inclined towards mobility. Looking at the categories consisting of individuals with higher levels of schooling, we note a growing migration trend particularly after 1996, a crucial time for the return of the internal migration phenomenon. The revival of internal mobility in the last few years may on the one hand contribute in the short term to a better balance between labour demand and supply, but on the other is draining the local human capital resources that the southern regions have greater need of in the medium/long term (Piras, 2007). This is another factor in strengthening polarisation of development, which only increases the dualism that has always gripped Italy.

This loss of human capital²⁰, which is also shown by the analyses carried out on the employment situation of graduates three years after completing their studies (Ciriaci, 2005) and the study of the overall content of human capital of interregional flows (Piras, 2007), highlights the fact that the south is not able to fully exploit the potential offered by these resources, which could make the area more competitive within the context of a global economy increasingly based on knowledge. Piras in particular analyses the new interregional migratory flows with explicit reference to graduates and the entire population. With reference to the former, it is shown that the net migration balance of southern regions has always incorporated a marked loss of graduates, and that this balance has progressively deteriorated in recent years. In relation to the entire population, an estimate is made of the content of human capital that takes into account both the different returns to education by region, and the quality of education. This again shows that southern regions have suffered a net loss of human capital to the advantage of central-northern regions.

In the recently relaunched debate on new southern migration, the issue of the brain drain to the detriment of the south has been highlighted not only in academic circles, but also by different national and local newspapers. Moreover, in its Annual Report²¹ (Bank of Italy, 2005), the then governor of the Bank of Italy also mentioned the loss of human capital due to the revival of migratory flows as one of the crucial aspects in the decline of the south, alongside the hidden economy, irregular work, lack of infrastructure and the marginalisation of young people and women: “In the south, compared to the mid-1990s, migratory flows of people with higher levels of education to central and northern regions have resumed”.

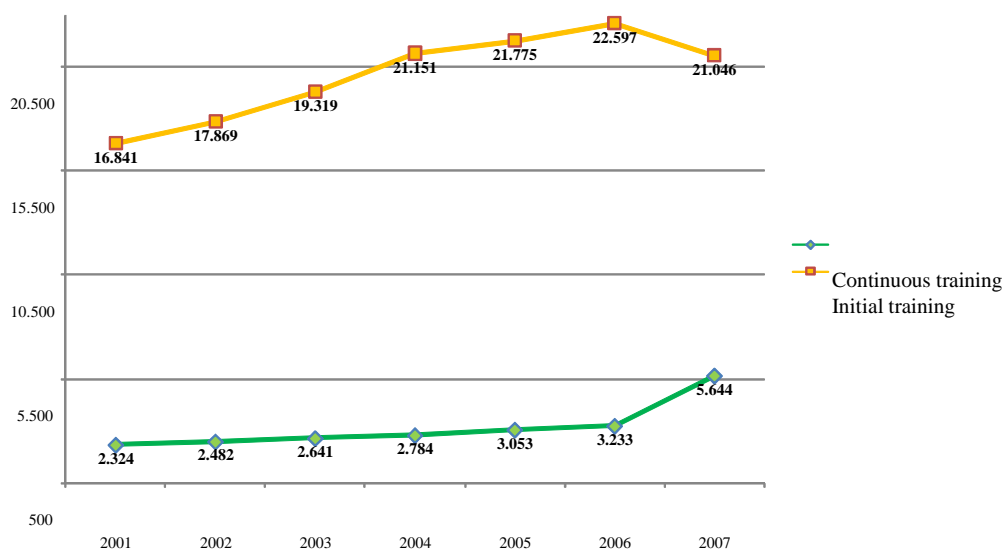
²⁰ Within studies on skilled migration, human capital is reduced to formal education only, thereby omitting the totality of knowledge, information, ideas and capacities possessed by individuals, and also those acquired through training at work and experience. See also Becker G., 2002 *The age of human capital*, in E.P. Lazear (ed.), *Education in the twenty-first century*, Hoover Institution Press, available at: <http://www.hoover.org/publications/books/fulltext/ed21st/3.pdf> .

4. Student migration and mobility in Italy

Since the end of the 1980s, European Commission programmes – led by Erasmus – have strongly boosted the exchange of students and teaching staff between higher education institutions of various countries. Although limited in number and duration, these experiences of mobility have opened up to students new horizons for personal and academic growth, and at the same time highlighted the barriers resulting from the diversity of national systems and traditions. (Sticchi Damiani, 2009).

After a decade of academic exchanges and the reciprocal sharing of knowledge between national systems, in 1999 in Bologna, ministers of 32 European countries outlined a vision for a European Space for Higher Education based on a common architecture consisting of three cycles, which allowed students and graduates to move from one system to another without difficulty. If we analyze data from 2001 to 2007 concerning Socrates and Leonardo Da Vinci (from 2007 part of the new LLP integrated programme), we find that 162.759 individuals have benefit of scholarships and traineeships for a mobility abroad, in the 86,4% of cases involved in initial training actions (140.598 individuals) and in the 13,6% in continuous training actions (22.161 individuals), mainly addressed to education and training operators. The growing trend on mobility changed in 2006 (as expressed by figure 2), becoming negative for initial training (-6,9% compared to the previous year) and increased of 74,6% for continuous training. This difference can be explained with the launch of the new LLP Programme and the availability of more funds in Leonardo Da Vinci for workers and training specialists. On the other hand, the distribution of the mobility regarding continuous training, is more balanced. In fact, Erasmus, Leonardo Da Vinci e Comenius programme have assigned per year around 1.084, 993 e 838 grants to university teachers, trainers and school teachers.

Fig. 2 Trend of individual mobility abroad for initial and continuous training experiences, 2001-2007



Source: Censis processing on Ansas-LLP Agency Italy data (Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig e viste di studio) and Isfol-LLP Agency Italy

Recent Almalaurea data show that at present, only 11.7% of Italian graduates have had an experience abroad (14.7% in specialist, single-cycle degrees and 10.5% in first-cycle degrees). However, the reform of Italian legislation in 1999 (DM 509/99) has yet to produce a visible quantitative or qualitative improvement in this mobility. Despite agreement in favour of the system's internationalisation, in the last ten years not only have we seen structural rigidity but also a lack of academic attention to the international experiences of our students. In addition, regulatory measures have not smoothed the process of enrolment of foreign students at our institutions (Sticchi Damiani, 2009).

As regards the effects of geographical mobility on employment pathways, Viesti (Viesti, 2005) analyses and describes mobility between different regions on a significant sample of graduates. The joint analysis of mobility for study and work enables the creation of fairly varied models of mobility in the different areas of the country, but overall balanced in the north (with the exception of Liguria and Friuli-Venezia Giulia) and heavily imbalanced in the south, which as a whole "gives up" a significant amount of human capital, even taking into account how much it manages to attract, also from abroad.

Overall (De Rita and Trombetti Budriesi, 2006), it emerges that Italian universities are increasingly better equipped to promote experiences abroad, but a national comparison shows different rates of enrolment in programmes, determined both by the concrete methods of support policies and by an organisation that in many ways still has room for improvement. The path is however traced out, although one figure should be highlighted: outgoing mobility is 40% higher in Italy than incoming mobility. The results of a survey promoted by the national committee for the evaluation of the university system on the international mobility of students, scholars and experts of various countries discuss the data collected and look at the issues of the European Space for Higher Education, inserting it in the process, which, from the Sorbonne and then Bologna (1998 and 1999), should lead in 2010 to the creation of the "most competitive knowledge economy in the world". The survey on mobility helped to create the first database on the Italian system, providing: figures for mobility, a quantitative study of incoming and outgoing students at European level; methods of managing and developing student mobility programmes, qualitative aspects of the implementation of mobility programmes; structures dedicated to international mobility, a census of the people involved in these programmes. The study also gives an account of the good practices noted at some universities, so that the comparison of experiences acts as a stimulus in a sector still struggling to take off.

The relationship between student mobility and employment is explored in studies conducted by Almalaurea, a consortium of Italian universities formed in 1994 on the initiative of the Statistical Observatory of the University of Bologna, with the objective of bringing together companies and graduates. In particular, the IX Report on the employment condition of Italian graduates (Almalaurea, 2007) was accompanied by a broad reflection on the transition to work in the main European countries and has allowed the consideration of the use of skills acquired during periods of study abroad to be explored in more depth.

However, the attractiveness of studying abroad for the average graduate – in light of the surveys promoted by AlmaLaurea – is hardly encouraging. The percentage of graduates that

have undertaken periods of study abroad during their university careers almost halved between 2001 and 2005, from 18.8% in 2001, to 16.5% in 2002, 17.1% in 2003, 11.3% in 2004 and just 10.8% in 2005.

Participation in Erasmus or other European Union programmes fell from 8.4% in 2001 to 6.7% in 2005, but the biggest fall was noted in other forms of experience abroad (recognised experiences and personal initiatives), which declined from 10.4% in 2001 to 3.9% in 2005. In just a few years, with growth in the number of graduates, student mobility programmes have been hit by an unprecedented crisis. However, the analysis of end-of-study results (Cagiano de Azevedo et al., 2006) is very encouraging: those who participated in Erasmus or another EU programme achieved a significantly better degree grade than their counterparts without any kind of experience. In contrast, an exploration of employment conditions in the short term does not seem to encourage an opening towards internationalisation. A year after graduation, the number of those who took part in Erasmus or another EU programme with a stable job is 16.5% less than those who had no experience of mobility during their studies. However, between three and five years after graduating, their income rises significantly, with an advance of 31%, four points higher than that registered by those without any experience abroad. The experience of mobility, therefore, has a positive impact on employment in the long term, from both a financial and professional viewpoint.

Conclusion

During the last five years, foreign presence in the Italian labor market has become more relevant, but, as remarked before, the increase of immigrant workers in the Italian labor market has not affected employment opportunities for natives, especially for women and people with high qualifications levels. New generations of immigrants will represent a significant component of the forthcoming labor force in the country but they need to be better involved and integrated in the education system. Education and training should act as a bridge for promoting an inclusive social policy towards migrants: from the social integration to social insertion of immigrants. In this process, many issues are at the core center of the political debate: providing enterprises with an increased role in the promotion of social integration, improving the process regarding the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, promotion of the Italian language through training courses thus facilitating the professional insertion of immigrants, enhancing job employment services for immigrants with proper guidance and orienteering services.

At European level, concerning the immigration phenomena, Italy is a country with a significant “young” immigration, where it is still predominant the first generation of immigrants.

Promoting and encouraging social mobility of immigrants, consists also in evaluating their career paths: from manual work into more qualified jobs, from employment segregation to a wider opportunity of professions and sectors. The history of Italian immigrations is too recent for allowing a deeper analysis of social mobility for immigrants; it will be therefore necessary to wait for the second and third generations and their full insertion in the labor market and

the implementation of effective VET policies for the development of immigrants human capital is of primary importance.

According statistics on Italian mobility abroad, those who have benefit of measures supporting learning mobility have been active participant to the opportunities offered by European programmes; mobility trends for students, school teachers, trainers and VET operators can be on the whole considered homogeneous compared to other European countries mobility rates.

Concerning the promotion of European mobility of learners, with the help of action programmes and other initiatives, a great deal has already been achieved in this field; now it is therefore necessary that mobility becomes an element of *mainstreaming* for VET policies, reducing the bureaucratic difficulties that could represent a deterrent for the participation of school and training institutions, enhancing the participation of enterprises in order to provide individual proneness to mobility with all the supporting tools for encouraging a common European identity in the field of education and training.

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Theme 3: Social mobility, equity and inclusive education²²

Abstract

Starting from the assumption of the strong relationship between social mobility, equity and vocational education and training, as also expressed by the Italian Constitution, the paper identifies the most important studies analysing the role of VET as a factor fostering change or inhibiting selection and social mobility mechanism.

Research studies carried out during last five years have contributed to the understanding of the role of VET promoting social mobility and equal opportunities, taking into consideration the potential role of education in improving the life change of individuals from less advantaged backgrounds. In the case of young people, their school choices show a great connection with their family background social status: employment outcomes seem to depend more on social origin than qualifications.

Other studies analyze the effect of other variables on social mobility (as for example belonging to different geographical areas), investigating the role of VET in promoting social inclusion for groups at risk: disadvantaged people, disabled, prisoners, foreign pupils and women's participation in labour market. Inclusive education and the equality of opportunities for all is in fact at the basis of an inclusive society.

Key findings

In Italy, social mobility is more apparent than real. The belonging to a social class still plays an important role, although other factors of inequality, such as gender and ethnicity, can also have a strong influence on the dynamics of stratification.

School and University do not change the chances of social mobility from one generation to another. Educational opportunities are strongly influenced by the family background and choices, but also by geographical and territorial differences. Indeed, learning quality is particularly low in Southern regions, although North Western regions present an higher number of early school leavers compared to the Southern ones.

In order to solve the above mentioned problems, the education system must offer high level guidance services and support the transition between different level of Education, postponing rather than bringing forward the moment of educational choices so that they are influenced as little as possible by initial social conditions.

Also concrete measures to support student mobility appear extremely useful.

To tackle the gender wage gap, welfare policies and in particular the provision of services to families also can have a positive effect.

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1. Introduction

Social mobility may be defined as the process through which individuals move between the various social standings within the society to which they belong. Specifically, this means analysing the degree to which inequalities between social classes in terms of available resources translate into class inequalities in terms of individuals' opportunities to attain a different status within society over their adult life.

The theme of education and social mobility is integrally related to issues of social equality and equity. OECD Education Ministers met informally in Oslo on 9-10 June 2009 to discuss how to improve equity in education and reduce dropout rates in upper secondary school. Ministers were updated on recent OECD findings on equity in education and recognised that fair and inclusive education is a powerful lever to make society more equitable and promote social mobility – particularly in times of economic and social crisis. But they noted that despite high political interest in improving equity and tackling school failure, much remains to be done.

In Italy, the issue of social mobility and equity has recently come to the fore, partly owing to the debate concerning to what extent the country is a meritocracy, intended as a system of organization wherein appointments are made and responsibilities assigned to individuals based upon demonstrated talent and ability (merit). In a meritocratic society, progress is based on ability and talent rather than on class privilege or wealth. Nevertheless, in the Italian society and economy, the main elements of meritocracy, equal opportunities offered by the educational system and free market, are deficient. For this reason, the effects of merit are negated and barriers to individual mobility are created (Abravanel, 2008).

Articles 3 and 34 of the Constitution place a clear focus on the principle of equality, arising from equal dignity of citizens in the society. They establish that "all economic and social obstacles must be removed", and "the able and deserving, even if lacking financial resources, have the right to attain the highest levels of study".

However, social mobility is more apparent than substantive, being driven more by structural changes than by a real and broad availability of opportunity. Furthermore, Checchi (2009) stated that complete equality of opportunity is not yet a reality, and the principle set out in the Constitution has yet to translate into real opportunities for much of the population. There is also a kind of bias, identifying equity with homogeneity: educational success is only in general or vocational education, not in the possibility to perform operative tasks.

Social classes continue to play a dominant role, although other factors of inequality, such as gender and ethnicity, can also play an important role in the dynamics of stratification.

Educational opportunities are also influenced by geographical and territorial differences. Learning quality is particularly low in southern regions and the migratory flows from south to north mainly concern young people with medium to high levels of education, with consequences that, over the long term, could cause an obstacle to the endogenous development of the south.

Equality of opportunity, in the overall sense, is the idea that people should be in the same starting conditions in life, or that everyone should have equal opportunities regardless of their birth and inheritance. For a better understanding of this term, could be useful to clarify the difference between “equality” and “equity”, that are non synonymous. Benadusi (2006) underlines that this clarification is important to understand the setting of educational policies. For a long time, has been used only the concept of “equality”, that includes equal rights under the law, but at the end of 20th century the problem of the distribution of educational opportunities has been faced using the concept of “equity”, intended as social solidarity in terms of fairness to people living now and in the future. This meaning implies the adoption of remedies to redress historic injustices that have prevented or diminished access in the first place.

In respect of the education system, the concept of equity relates to the need to diversify economic resources and educational tools, to allow the same results to be achieved, in terms of school and learning, by individuals or groups of individuals from different socio-cultural backgrounds (Benadusi, Giancola, Viteritti, 2008). However, according to the national report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion in 2008²³, the objective set by the Lisbon Agenda, to reduce school dropout rates to under 10%, remains a distant target, as early school leavers constitute 20.9% of the population, a figure that has only seen a minimal decrease in the last three years. Furthermore, based on the results of the PISA-OECD study, we can infer that school in Italy is nor a driver of vertical social mobility, neither a decisive factor to prevent social marginality for children belonging to vulnerable groups.

The analysis is provided by class, disabled people, gender, geographical provenance and social condition. In fact, studies conducted in Italy over the last five years have run along these lines, with particular attention also paid to the inclusion of the socially disadvantaged, such as drop-outs, disabled people, immigrants and prison inmates. Furthermore, Checchi (2006) and Rustichelli (2007) realized researches centred on gender segregation and the gender pay gap, with a particular emphasis on women’s education choices of women and their effects on the labour market.

2. Young people’s choices

School attendance rates increased substantially over the 20th century, but there was no correspondent drop in the disparity in access to education, particularly to the final segment that includes upper secondary school and university (Censis, 2006). This statement is grounded in the studies of economists such as Daniele Checchi of the University of Milan and sociologists such as Antonio Schizzerotto of the University of Trento.

²³ Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies, national report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion. November 2008. Download: http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/F2FE6E0F-58A5-4090-B053-24085D9D1243/0/Rapportonaz_incl_prot_sal_2008_2010.pdf

Peragine and Serlenga (2008), with other authors, have produced an extensive body of literature concerned with the measurement of inequality of opportunity, with both a theoretical and an empirical flavour. From the research conducted in the last few years in the economic field, the picture of Italian school that emerges is still one that relates to “class”, which privileges the well-off and penalises socially more vulnerable families. Although disparities in terms of education have decreased considerably over time by Checchi, Fiorio and Leonardi (2006), education and training paths still seem to be conditioned by family background. On this subject, Ballarino and Checchi (2006) produced a collection of essays, which reviews methods and findings and approaches the relationship between education system and social inequality empirically from various viewpoints. The image of the “glass ceiling” for young people is used to exemplify the difficulties that the socially most vulnerable students in Italy face today. It transpires that, still in the last few generations (those born in the 1970s) approximately 30% of boys whose fathers received a lower secondary education diploma reach the same level, almost 60% receive a senior secondary education diploma, but only a few (less than 10%) graduate from university. Therefore, although the correlation between schooling levels of fathers and children is generally falling, with the number of those gaining a diploma increasing substantially, there is a slowdown in the process, if not to say a trend reversal, when we consider access to university, the highest level of education.

Schizzerotto and Barone (2006) point out the same situation: starting from an historical comparative viewpoint, they show how inequality tends to increase at university, which represents a barrier to children from socially vulnerable classes. An analysis of the proportion of people attending university by class of origin shows higher growth for the middle and upper classes, while the lower classes (workers, agricultural workers, office workers, service staff) tend to finish their education earlier. Employment outcomes, therefore, seem to depend more on social origin than qualifications. A picture emerges of an “immobile” (Schizzerotto, 2006) and rather non-meritocratic society. The choice of secondary school – between a *liceo*, technical and vocational institutions – is still heavily conditioned by parents’ schooling levels: in Italy more than elsewhere, merit has an impact for the lower classes, but it has no influence on the higher classes, where young people tend to reach the same level as their parents.

It is the school they attend, much more than personal skills, that shapes young peoples’ aspirations (Checchi and Flabbi, 2007). 80.5% of students enrolled in a *liceo* say they would like to graduate from university, compared to 34.5% of those enrolled in technical schools and 15.9% of students in vocational schools.

Ballarino and Checchi (2006) focus on the relationship between the parents’ schooling level and their children’s educational and training paths. Based on PISA 2003 data, they analyse the various factors that influence educational choices and success in Italy today. The fundamental fact that emerges is that parents’ education has a much greater determining impact on the choice and the outcome of education paths of their children than employment and income, a factor that nevertheless has a significant influence. "Two students identical in terms of skills, previous educational experience, family situation, number of books at home, but different only in that one of the two has at least one parent with a university degree, will have

significantly different probabilities in terms of school enrolment. A child of a university graduate is 25% more likely to go to a *liceo* than a child of somebody who only graduated from secondary school".

If parents' education level is important up until transition to university, and does not decrease as their children's career progresses, we must infer that Italy is still far from offering equality of opportunity in access to education, nor in the subsequent job market. Research carried out in the last few years shows that school and university do not change the chances of social mobility from one generation to another. The work of Checchi and Redaelli²⁴ - to be published in a volume investigating different aspects and structures concerning the "immobility" of Italian society - is the result of interdisciplinary research coordinated by Daniele Checchi, which gathers together contributions from different scholars on the various causes of immobility (income, education, the labour market, the professions, succession), in which data from the PISA-OECD 2006 survey is analysed from a new angle. The impact of family background is analysed through three different variables: parents' schooling levels, the social prestige of their occupation and educational resources in the home. The study shows the significant impact of family background, not only on the children's educational careers but also on their incomes and competencies acquired. Socio-economic variables seem to be more important than cultural factors, and the passage from lower to upper secondary school, in which family background is still more important than valuation of merit, seems crucial.

In a very recent research to be published²⁵ by Checchi (2009), he observes a decreasing effect of environmental factors on the failure to obtain a secondary school diploma, that seems related more to material contingencies in the families than to selectivity based on merit or class. To offer more opportunities for the access to secondary school, he hypothesizes also an upward shift of the age where the separation of secondary school pathways occurs.

These results are confirmed by the *monitoring results in education and training for pupils in compulsory education and training*, conducted by Isfol²⁶ in 2006. The analysis, carried out among students in the third year of lower secondary school and their mothers, showed the strong role played at a socio-cultural level by family background on the education and employment outcomes of the children, even though adolescents often portray themselves during the research as the only ones responsible for their future. In other words, the study seemed to confirm how existing patterns tend to be repeated, both in terms of education and profession, a situation symptomatic of a lack of social mobility, that, as set out by European recommendations, requires a quality initial education and training system, based on the balance between "efficiency and equity".

Likewise, another survey, conducted by Isfol in 2006, was intended to show and describe the processes relating to choice among students in the last year of higher secondary schools in

²⁴ Provisional title: "Relazione tra ambiente familiare e acquisizione di competenze nei giovani italiani quindicenni"

²⁵ Checchi, D.: Uguaglianza delle opportunità nella scuola secondaria italiana, to be published in the "Fondazione Agnelli" second report on school in Italy.

²⁶ Institute for the development of vocational training of workers

relation to post-secondary education, both at university and non academic level. The survey underlines the existence of a sort of “predetermination” in the choices made by young people in the educational field, as if they were still influenced by external factors, although students clearly make a personal effort in searching information functional for their choice. The factors mainly determining the choices of young people, concern specifically the role played by socio-cultural background and the degree of success/failure in education history, in respect of which still remain some deficiencies in guidance system, supporting information in the delicate periods of transition that young people experience within education and when they enter the labour market.

The lack of skills audit permanent services, embedded in the employment services, represents another important barrier to social mobility. Although skills audit is theoretically foreseen by almost all official documents and in most of training projects, the skills audit practices are still poorly widespread and recognized. Individuals in trouble and needing a skills audit to support their transition through a new job or a new position, cannot find institutional help, tools and professionals able to support this process (Oliva, 2007)²⁷.

The persistence of a link between parents’ professions and qualifications on the one hand and the education decisions of their children on the other is further evidence of the limited prospects in terms of social mobility.

On the same issue, the studies realized by Benadusi, Giancola and Viteritti (2008), contains an interesting comparative analysis of the effects of the education systems and macro-policies on students’ choices and school careers. Specifically, the authors offer a picture of real school practices, underlining how “equity, quality, innovation” are still interrupted paths, often running parallel to each other and still having uncertain overall effects. The study combines qualitative and quantitative methods, together with different disciplinary approaches; thus allowing the comprehension of how change and innovation, introduced through legislation, affect the reality of autonomous educational institutions, modifying attitudes and behaviour.

On the same issues, Bottani and Benadusi (2006) have edited a volume focused on the equity as a term of reference for VET policies. It makes an analysis of measures to adopt so as to school remains an Institution able to distribute knowledge and to build up a “right society”, developing human capital and creating conditions for a democratic and sustainable development of our society. An important item to be considered concerns the selection criteria and the adoption, whereas possible, of undifferentiated curricula, in order to avoid premature choices that can create marginalization.

Scanagatta and Maccarini (2009) place this debate in relation to the notion of social capital. Their empirical research and theoretical interpretation are aimed to investigate which personal pathways and social experiences can generate a successful education. The authors’ aim is to identify the conditions and the processes that allow to educational organizations to become a “social capital” for the Italian society, underlining the relevance of the educational networks and institutional cooperation.

²⁷ Oliva, C. (2007): in ISFOL, *Orientare l’Orientamento. Politiche azioni e strumenti per un sistema di qualità*. Roma: Isfol, Temi & strumenti.

Giancola (2009) analyses in detail the explanatory factors behind the differences in students' competencies and educational careers using social background variables. The specific analysis of the Italian situation looks at variables relating to region, perception and motivation, and highlights the salient characteristics of the system: low average performance, high threshold disparity, strong impact of differences in pathways, strong variations between schools and pathways.

An examination of these issues is also provided by AlmaLaurea²⁸, partly through data from the *Survey on the employment conditions of graduates*²⁹, which outlines a country that is still rather rigid in terms of intergenerational social mobility, in which fathers pass on qualification levels and jobs to their children, almost in an hereditary manner, particularly in the case of the liberal professions (44% of architect fathers have a child graduating in architecture; 42% of fathers with a degree in law have a child with the same qualification, and the same can be said of 41% of pharmacist fathers, 39% of engineer and doctor fathers, etc).

As pointed out by Bratti and Leonardi (2006), the so-called "3+2" reform, following the Bologna Process objective to create an "European space of higher education" and introduced by Ministerial Decree 509 of 1999, had a "democratising" effect on university entry, but not on graduation. The number of students enrolling whose parents do not have a degree has increased by 9%, but the number of graduates from these families has not risen. If we look at specialist university-degrees, of a five years duration, the number of graduated students with less educated parents is still lower. Instead, the dropout rate has increased, from 10.5% in 1998 to 12.3% in 2001, for students with less educated parents. Without a narrowing of the spread in the dropout rate, social mobility cannot grow. However, comparing pre- and post-reform education outcomes is problematic, firstly, because the reform is still going through a period of transition, with the gradual disappearance of the old order, and secondly, because the data available are incomplete.

The role of VET on widening participation in education has been underlined by Sugamiele (2007), that blames the lack of a wide and structured system of Vocational Training, able to answer the needs of enterprises. Very often, the qualification of workers is not coherent with the employment found and the enterprises prefer employ young people to train subsequently, on the basis of their specific needs. The relationship between vocational training offer and labour market has been underestimated for the longest time and the transition time between VET and labour market has been prolonged continuously. The recent re-organisation of technical and professional schools³⁰ may offer an answer to this attempt to increase the value

²⁸ Interuniversity consortium, created in 1994 on the initiative of the Statistical Observatory of the University of Bologna, which brings together companies and graduates, and is an internal point of reference within the university sector for anyone (scholars, operators, etc...) dealing at various levels with the issues of university study, employment and the circumstances of young people.

²⁹ AlmaLaurea interuniversity consortium – 10th Report on the employment condition of graduates one, three and five years after graduation – 2007 survey. Download <http://www.almalaurea.it/universita/occupazione/occupazione05/>

³⁰ In May 2008 have been approved by the Ministry of Education the provisional rules for the reform of technical and vocational institutes, that are still waiting for the final approval. Concerning the technical institutes, the reform is aimed to reduce the number of branches and to strengthen the scientific and technical competences. The vocational training pathways, managed by the Regions, will be restructured in two

of VET pathways (Colasanto, 2009), provided that the training pathways are able to intercept either the needs of enterprises or the different learning styles and needs of pupils in order to ensure their transition to the labour market.

The issue of social mobility and education is still strictly correlated to the development of human capital, as shown by Franzini and Raitano (2005). The education system must break the generational transmission of cognitive deficiencies, postponing rather than bringing forward the moment of educational choices so that they are influenced as little as possible by initial social conditions. “Still with a view to promoting the contribution of human capital to economic growth, a rather urgent question relates to the quality of education and the overall efficiency of the education system”. In connection with this, reference is made to the experience of *vouchers*³¹, often considered as a mechanism to foster competition; however, it is shown that if badly designed, this instrument can do little to promote virtuous competition and much to favour segments of society that do not deserve this privilege.

“Concrete measures to support student mobility appear, in any case, extremely useful. These measures must, of course, reduce all costs associated with mobility and may also be devised so as to limit the phenomenon of proliferation of peripheral institutions, where, for various reasons, the quality of education could be worse. One policy that could be immediately implemented is to transform funds used in voucher schemes into measures to support student mobility” (Franzini and Raitano, 2005). An interesting experience has been carried out in Regione Lombardia, where has been introduced the “training and scholar dowry”³², intended as a set of resources to increase competences and skills offering training opportunities to disadvantaged pupils.

A study on increasing the value of “merit” was conducted by Ignazio Visco, general deputy director of the Bank of Italy, in the volume “*Investire in conoscenza*”, in which he analyses the Italian deficit in “human capital”, considered as the main reason for the lack of productivity growth in the last ten years. Furthermore, the study highlights that, despite the proliferation of institutions and courses, the (theoretical) reduction of the duration of studies and instances of students not acquiring sufficient credits within the time period prescribed, the increase in registrations, university education in Italy is still not for the masses, but concerns a percentage of young people below that of other western countries.

macro-sectors and six branches, strengthening the link with the enterprises and encouraging different forms of alternating training.

³¹Vouchers are training coupons, issued to individual workers, generally upon presentation of individual projects, for participation in training activities. The voucher experiment was launched in 1998 in some Italian regions, and was subsequently rolled out to other regions until it covered almost the whole country. Specifically, this experiment was part of measures for continuous training of employed workers in response to individual demand in application of law 236/93. For further details, please see : <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Lavoro/Europalavoro/SezioneOperatori/Formazione/FormazioneContinua/vouchers.htm>

³² <http://www.regione.lombardia.it/>. → sistema dote

3. Social mobility related to geographical mobility

Many studies conducted in the last few years have focused on the factor of belonging to different geographical areas as a significant variable for social mobility. Educational opportunities are strongly influenced not just by an individual's initial social conditions (family background), but also by geographical and territorial differences. Gaps between returns to education in Italy are also significant, and depend heavily on factors such as area of residence and family background, as stated by Checchi and Peragine (2005). The complex inter-relationship that exists between migration and social mobility is analysed by Coniglio and Peragine (2008), who highlight how the degree of social mobility, and in particular the degree of intergenerational mobility present in the economy is important in two ways: in terms of distributive equity, since a society with a high level of social mobility is one that guarantees equality in initial opportunities presented to individuals; and that of efficiency and development, since "a mobile society enables a more efficient allocation of resources and a greater accumulation of human capital" (Coniglio and Peragine, 2008). Investment in education therefore appears strictly linked to investment in human capital, from a meritocratic viewpoint.

In this regard, the study conducted by Fondazione Agnelli (2009) shows the risks faced by the school system in Italy, which include territorial differences between schools that are among the largest in Europe.

There is irrefutable evidence that learning quality is particularly low in southern regions, which largely explains Italy's disappointing position in international rankings. It is only right that the already excellent level in the north-east (at the top of international tables alongside Finland and Korea) continues to improve, as the quality of an education system is also measured by its highest achievements.

Nevertheless, "the level of central government funding is fairly homogenous across schools, reflecting relatively uniform rates of teacher compensation. There are quite large differences in the local funds transferred to schools from provinces and communes" (Ocde, 2009).

The observation that there is wide regional variation in pupils' performance but relative homogeneity in funding levels suggests considerable variation in efficiency (Ocde, 2009). It is clear (especially with fiscal federalism redefining the balance of financial resources for education) that the national battle to improve learning is today carried out above all in lower performing areas in order to avoid the definitive relegation of southern schools and reduce the divide separating them from other regions. This is the only sustainable route to increase the overall quality of the Italian education system.

However, as underlined by Checchi (2009, forthcoming), Isfol Plus survey stresses that North Western regions present higher drops out compared to the Southern ones (41, 98% vs. 38,38).

Still on the issue of geographical mobility, another study, conducted by Isfol in 2006³³, focuses on the distinction between “healthy” and “forced” migration from the south to the north of Italy, and on the consequent brain drain. Migratory flows mainly concern young people with medium to high levels of education, with consequences that, over the long term, could prove an obstacle to the endogenous development of the south, neutralizing the effects of policies adopted in the last few years.

4. VET and inclusion of disadvantaged people

Among the strategies for inclusion implemented to guarantee conditions of equity in terms of VET, we can mention a) the evaluation of internship and apprenticeship experiences; b) the recognition and assessment of transversal competencies and formal and non-formal learning. Until today, Italy has faced this issue organically, as a strategic institutional tool to increase the value of human resources by building a system of lifelong learning, but, as shown by research conducted by Isfol (2007)³⁴, has produced many experiences, the value of which must be reflected in order to form a systematic response.

With regard to measures to fight dropping out, since 2000 Isfol has carried out studies on the system of training obligation (first) and the right-duty to education and training, and compulsory education (subsequently), focusing on the education offer and measures to combat dropping out, such as instruments aimed at promoting participation of the under-18s in education courses. The qualitative and quantitative analysis carried out annually on education courses, information systems and on guidance measures and measures to bring drop-outs back into the education system carried out over the national territory constitutes the main source of information on the development of actions and policies relating to the issue of “inclusive education”³⁵. Regional professional training pathways leading to qualifications for the under-18s can be related to the development of a model to integrate people who have experienced failure in traditional education based on the adoption of participative methodologies focused on students and based on the use of laboratory and work methods for projects as instruments to promote the *empowerment* of young people in education³⁶.

³³ Isfol (2006): La mobilità costretta. La mobilità geografica dei giovani italiani: caratteristiche e prospettive delle Regioni del Mezzogiorno. Roma: Isfol, Temi & strumenti.

³⁴ Isfol (2007): Esperienze di validazione dell'apprendimento non formale e informale in Italia e in Europe. Roma: Isfol, Temi & strumenti.

³⁵ Isfol (forthcoming 2009): Le misure per il successo formativo – VIII Rapporto di monitoraggio del diritto-dovere. Roma: Isfol, I libri del Fondo sociale europeo. Isfol (2008): Partecipazione e dispersione – VIII Rapporto di monitoraggio del diritto-dovere. Roma: Isfol, I libri del Fondo sociale europeo.

³⁶ Isfol (2007): L'accompagnamento al successo formativo. Strategie e modelli operativi dei centri per l'impiego. Roma: Isfol, Temi & strumenti.

On the importance of internships and apprenticeship experiences to fight against dispersion, Isfol conducted a study³⁷ (2005), which analyses the Italian situation, outlining the functions of mentoring within the university environment and examining the way it crosses over with tutoring in order to explore the offer of services for university students. The data that emerges from the survey show that Italian universities mainly use students in their last few years as key figures in providing support to newly-enrolled university students (93.5%) or teaching staff (64.9%), while the use of external people to support students in their university life is quite homogenous and limited throughout the country, with an average of 5.5%.

5. The integration of disabled pupils

The debate on inclusion also concerns the disabled. The framework law on the rights of disabled people, law no. 104 of 5 February 1992, defines school integration practices in articles 12 to 16 and article 43. In 1994, the presidential decree of 24 February defined the role of specialist technical support that health services must have with regard to schools involved in integration processes. These two pieces of legislation still govern daily practices in school integration: since then, in the last 15 years, no specific regulation has been issued, except a Prime Minister's Decree in August 2006, which very slightly redefined the health certification procedures of disabled students.

In Italy, research on the integration in school of disabled pupils is spread over several lines, ranging from the description and valuation of integration practices to action research on good integration practices, including the definition of quality indicators for integration. Particular attention is paid to the effects of school integration practices in the work conducted by D'Alonzo and Ianes (2007). This work showed the pathway of school, social and adult life integration for disabled people, and at the same time was able to assess the quality of life and satisfaction of people with disabilities and their families. The research was carried out on a longitudinal basis, analysing, through the eyes of families and disabled people, the special life situations and school experiences of disabled people, who had special school attendance and who are now around fifty years old, and the subsequent generations that have benefited from integrated education.

At institutional level, the following studies are worthy of note:

1. The INVALSI³⁸ 2005/2006 quantitative and descriptive research on the integration at school of pupils with disabilities³⁹, was intended to highlight/find out the human, material, organisational, procedural and instrumental resources helping to integrate pupils with disabilities. The issues faced in the study concern the different environments related with the planning of integration strategies, considering all the actors involved. A positive framework emerges overall for elementary schools, as the data shows that institutions have largely implemented the provisions of law 104/92 as

³⁷ Isfol (2005): L'accompagnamento per contrastare la dispersione universitaria: mentoring e tutoring a sostegno degli studenti. Roma: Isfol, I libri del Fondo sociale europeo.

³⁸ The National Institution for the Evaluation of the Education System (www.invalsi.it)

³⁹ Please, consult : <http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/download.php?page=rissetsistema>

amended. However, it is highlighted that there is a need – often also repeated at European level – to systemise the monitoring of integration of disabled pupils at school to combine the quantitative analysis with qualitative research tools, to show good integration practices and to launch an in-depth study into the education and skills acquired of pupils with disabilities.

2. The I-Care⁴⁰ 2007-2009 project of the Ministry of Education, specifically targeting problems of school and social integration of children with disabilities, but more generally, aimed at promoting a real inclusive dimension in Italian schools through systematic training measures and activities for the teaching staff and heads of state and legally recognised (*paritarie*) schools on issues relating to integration policies.

On special education needs, it is worthy of note the research “Early identification of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)” in infant school, conducted by the Faculty of Science of the Free University of Bolzano, coordinated by Dario Ianes (2005). The project investigated whether it was possible to identify this disorder in primary school, experimenting with three different observation tools, and following the route from signs to actual diagnosis.

Remaining in Academic context, Roberto Medeghini makes a contribution to the debate on the inclusion of disadvantaged individuals (2009). According to the study, inclusive education aims at guaranteeing the participation of all pupils in the learning process as people, and not because they belong to a special category (for example, the disabled, foreigners, Roma or women).

6. Social inclusion and education for prisoners

Research carried out to explore the issue of education and training for prisoners includes that of Cosimo Scaglioso (2008). In the author’s view, prison is a sign of social control, a response to people’s fear and security demand and is not a pathway through which prisoners may show their characters as persons and citizens, making themselves open to a positive reintroduction into society. Pursuant to article 27 of the Constitution, a more human prison system is required to make an effective contribution through education and training initiatives; nevertheless also society must be governed producing people, jobs, solidarity and conditions that promote positive relations among citizens.

The right to education for prisoners is analysed by Saverio Migliori (2007). The work looks at all the unresolved theoretical and practical problems related to the treatment rationale in prison: the relationship between re-education and marginality, the disciplinary or medical effects of the correctionalist perspective, the difficult relationship between treatment elements and fundamental rights (for example, education). Quality educational strategies that may be adopted in pedagogical planning and practice are identified, in the firm belief that implementing them in problematic environments will increase the possibility of being used more widely in ordinary education situations. It is emphasised that there is a need to reconsider re-education provided in prison as a right to education and as an experience able to direct, rebuild and consolidate autonomy and independence of thought and action.

⁴⁰ *Imparare Comunicare Agire in una Rete Educativa [Learn, Communicate, Act in an Education Network]*

7. School integration of foreign pupils

The presence of pupils of foreign origins, which has gradually increased over the years, is a structural factor within our school system. From the beginning, Italy has opted for full integration of all pupils in school, considering intercultural education as a transversal dimension and integration of all disciplines and teachers.

In the school year 2007/08, pupils of non-Italian citizenship present in the national school system represented 6.4% of the total, corresponding to 574,133.

The report of the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research for the school year 2007/2008, entitled “Foreign pupils in the Italian school system. School year 2007/2008”⁴¹, provides a complete body of information on foreign pupils, supplemented for the first time by data on the number of students born in Italy, also known as “second generation”, and the number of those enrolling in the Italian school system for the first time. A constantly changing picture emerges. Primary and lower secondary schools have the highest number of pupils of foreign origin, representing 7.7% and 7.3% respectively of the entire school population. The analysis realized by Cariplo-Compagnia San Paolo⁴² (2009) underlines that immigrant pupils are more often early school leavers, probably due to failures.

Furthermore, according to Checchi (2009, forthcoming), income needs can justify the choice to choose shorter pathways (technical and professional schools) and early school leave (although cultural differences among ethnic groups can influence these choices).

The lack of proportion of non-Italian students not up to date with their studies is a particularly worrying factor, owing both to difficulties relating to their knowledge of the Italian language and problems relating to social integration. On average, 42.5% of foreign pupils are not up to date with their studies and their discomfort at school increases with age. Figures on the presence of travelling children in school are very topical, totalling 12,342, a rise of 4.3% compared to the previous school year. The document represents a reference point for those seeking effective organisational solutions and useful guidance for the work of schools.

On this issue, Ravecca (2009) has realized a quantitative survey on a representative sample of students coming from Ecuador and attending high school in Genoa, with the aim to offer a complete picture of school achievements of immigrants child, underlining the implications in terms of segregation and social mobility.

8. Women’s participation in Italy’s labour market: the gender wage gap and obstacles to entering the world of work

The existence of a significant gender wage gap is a recurring result in studies on the Italian labour market (Rustichelli, 2007). Men generally receive higher wages than women, even

⁴¹ Available at : http://www.pubblica.istruzione.it/dg_studieprogrammazione/notiziario_stranieri_0708.pdf

⁴² The study focuses on equal opportunities in the choice of school pathways; for further details please check: http://www.compagnia.torino.it/file/pdf/Es_CSP_rapporto_2008_ITA_x_sito_361.pdf.

when they have the same characteristics (Di Meliciani, 2006). However, empirical analysis shows that women's investment in education is no less than that of men. Various studies have analysed the causes of wage discrimination.

In this field of research, Solera and Bettio (2007) identified a link between women's high level of education and their capacity to enter and remain in the labour market. This study shows that highly-educated women are more likely to enter professions and assume roles less traditionally occupied by women and find more accommodating working solutions.

Rosti (2006) offers an investigation into occupational segregation in Italy. She undertakes an empirical overview of the occupational segregation in Italy (using the term in its descriptive sense) and concludes that the occupational segregation depends on factors such as the relationship between family and work, internalised stereotypes that influence educational choices, anticipated discrimination from employers and the rules of the competition in tournaments. It is worth noting that gender segregation is also prevalent within continuous training courses for the employed, where the same gaps that exist in work tend to be reproduced, as highlighted in the 2007 Report on continuous training conducted by Isfol for the Ministry of Work, which showed that there are proportionately more men in courses aimed at innovation and advanced services, while there are more women in traditionally female sectors, such as school and people services.

The *PLUS - Participation Labour Unemployment Survey*, conducted by Isfol in 2005, provides data and information not just on qualifications obtained, but also on specific skills (languages, IT, etc.) acquired by workers and on continuous training, thereby providing a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between education, competencies and gender wage discrimination (Di Meliciani, 2006). A picture emerges in which female employees have on average higher qualifications than their male counterparts, a higher percentage of them attend training courses and they have on average greater competencies, with the exception of IT skills. Although women on the market have on average greater productivity than men, they are nevertheless paid less.

The gender wage gap cannot therefore be attributed to the lower investment in human capital by women. Even the presence of children does not seem directly linked to wage discrimination. It is supposed, rather, that employers, not knowing beforehand the future choices of women and concerned that they will give up work in the future, are inclined to invest more in training men, thereby penalising women. The results of the study suggest how labour supply-side policies, particularly human capital policies, are not sufficient to eliminate the phenomenon of gender discrimination, which could be better tackled by labour demand-side policies and with policies that make less recourse to part-time employment possible.

Rustichelli *et al* (Isfol, 2007) presents the results of the first phase of a survey into the gender wage gap, through methodological contributions, the studies and reflections of a group of experts asked to highlight the critical issues at labour market and work organisation policy level that represent obstacles to achieving concrete wage parity. The data shows that the difference in men and women's wage levels is greater in more qualified and better paid professions and in the areas of the country where the average income is higher, which are also

those in which the female activity rate has already met Lisbon 2010 targets, and longer over the working life. Therefore, the issue of wage gender discrimination does not exclusively concern the lower categories of female employment, but affects the entire production and professional system, both in the private and public sectors. Although part of the difference can be explained by the different hours worked by men and women, the studies reported talk of a situation in Italy in which women draw lower salaries than men even when they have the same professional qualifications and work the same hours. Furthermore, the difference in wage levels increases in relative terms as pay increases, meaning that the higher the salary women get, the further it moves away on average from that of men. The wage gap is closely correlated with age. At the times when duties relating to domestic work, the care of children and support of the aged become greater, it is women who totally or partially give up work, resorting to part-time work or other forms of work flexibility. Consequently, welfare policies and in particular the provision of services to families also has an effect on the wage gap.

Other empirical studies focus on the persistence of the glass ceiling phenomenon. Even when women reach management level, there is a factor of discrimination in the remuneration paid to them (Centra and Cuttillo, 2009). There are two possible explanations for this offered by studies on this topic, as summarised by Centra and Cuttillo: according to the first, employers exclude women from certain (male) occupations, with the result that women crowd into other occupations. The supply of female workforce in these occupations increases, resulting in lower wages.

The second explanation states that women voluntarily choose certain occupations: men, more often than women, place great importance in remuneration levels, while women often tend to seek work with lower pay but other desirable characteristics that make up for the lower income.

Nevertheless, the OECD-PISA 2006 Research⁴³ data highlights that girls have generally better performances. A substantial equality between genders concerns the various science competencies, knowledge components and attitudes to science, but doesn't coincide with equal opportunities in the field of studies and labour market. The number of women graduated in scientific subjects is equal or longer than men, but the social appreciation of professions and job opportunities in the field of technological or scientific research is lower.

The work-life balance therefore becomes very important, and should be taken into consideration for a reliable assessment of the wage discrimination that women suffer in respect of men on the labour market.

This issue was also explored by the work of the XXIV convention of the A.I.E.L. – the Italian Association of Labour Economists – held at the University of Sassari on 24 and 25 September 2009, in which 130 Italian and foreign scholars discussed “Work, wellbeing and gender” and “The European employment strategy: evaluation and prospects”. The analysis of the role that

⁴³ http://www.invalsi.it/invalsi/ri/pisa2006.php?page=pisa2006_it_05

gender differences have on the labour market, in the creation and perception of well-being, was at the centre of the first plenary work session. One of the studies discussed during the first session was Isfol's paper "A hierarchical analysis of female inactivity in Italy", proposed during the study dedicated to the value of time. Marco Centra and Valentina Gualtieri (Isfol), together with Andrea Cutillo (Istat), provided an analysis of the causes of female inactivity in Italy among married and cohabiting women aged 24-45. The analysis considered both the individual characteristics of the women and those of their current family and family of origin. The results presented in this contribution are however to be considered as a first step in a wider piece of research, as there may be opportunities to consider further or different explanatory variables.

Conclusions

The job represents the most important mobility channel in our society. In order to restore trust and "élan vital" in Italy, policy makers agree on the importance to re-launch this topic at the political level, even if it doesn't guarantee a great media exposure.

Istat (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, the National Institute of Statistics) and Censis (Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali, one of the most prestigious national research institutes in social sciences and economics) have realized several studies from which came out the following facts.

At a first glance, the data on social mobility gives the idea of a dynamic context, characterized by a significant rate of social mobility. However, an in depth analysis reveals that the social mobility is apparent and is pushed from structural changes, more than a wide range of opportunities. Compared with parents, a lot of factory workers and farmers sons have better conditions of life, but this enhancement is often due to the broader access to consumer goods and to a general increase in living standards.

The most concrete element of this scarce social mobility can be found in the strong differences concerning the access to educational and training opportunities. The difficulties on social upgrade are more evident in the south and for women, that study more than men and have less job opportunities, especially if they come from factory workers and farmers families.

A relevant policy debate issue will be the reform of the devices improving accessibility of resources and opportunities and usability of services and information in order to avoid that the conditions of fathers fall on sons and influence their social fate.

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Theme 4: Transitions⁴⁵

Abstract

Studies on the trends and characteristics of working life and the job market are a prerequisite for planning and improving vocational education and training systems. In this section, we focus on the issue of transitions, encompassing a wide range of changes in status: school-work transitions, internal and external labour market flows, training and social mobility. Then, we provide a non-exhaustive summary of the work done in Italy in the last five years⁴⁶ in relation to these issues, showing, from a meta-analytical viewpoint and depending on the case in point, the focus of the research carried out, the data used and the main results. Subsequently, we present some important projects and initiatives that will broaden the information base and instruments used in Italy for the study and analysis of training choices and employment paths.

Introduction

The researches on trends and features of labour market are an essential prerequisite for the planning and the improvement of VET systems.

The choice of VET pathways responds partly to subjective orientations. Nevertheless, the observation of the transitions taking place on labour market, in terms of opportunities of job insertion or re-admission in case of job loss, influences the choice between general educational curricula and vocational training, aimed to specific jobs.

Furthermore, the choice of an educational pathway is influenced by the analysis of the incomes foreseen and stability of the job. It influences the training courses supply and demand, from public and private institutions.

In the present section, the attention is focused on the theme of transitions, including a wide range of status changeover: school-job transition, internal and external labour market flows, education and social mobility.

Subsequently, are presented some important initiatives and programmes that will allow to have a better awareness of provisions and tools concerning the educational choices and job insertion.

Finally, within the conclusions are offered in-depth examinations and research results.

⁴⁵ Peer Review: Marco Centra, Isfol Researcher.

⁴⁶ For an overview of the studies produced in Italy recently on transitions and in general on employment economics, see Dell'Aringa, C., Lucifora, C. (2009) (editors), *Il mercato del lavoro in Italia. Analisi e politiche*, Carocci Editore, and S. Porcari (2009) (editors), "Temi chiave in economia del lavoro: la ricerca recente in Italia", Isfol, *Monografie sul mercato del lavoro e le politiche per l'impiego*, no. 2/2009, RP(MDL)-2/09.

1. Recent studies in Italy

1.1. Returns to education and occupational outcomes

As well as the numerous papers seeking to measure and compare the quantity and quality of education provided in Italy on an international level (Checchi 2003 and 2004, Cammelli, 2007a, Cappellari and Lucifora, 2008, Felici 2007, Foresti and Pennisi 2007, Bratti, Checchi and Filippin, 2007), a large number of studies focus on professional outcomes based on different qualifications.

The first aspect concerns an estimate of returns to education, usually made by quantifying returns to education using Mincerian equations (Mincer, 1974), that is by comparing the spread of net wages (after related deductions) between two identical groups of people who followed different educational paths. The methodological aspects of this type of analysis, which, while having a fairly common theoretical basis, differed on important issues relating to measuring, were reviewed by Checchi (2003b). Despite differences in quantification, the studies converge in finding that returns to education in Italy are on average quite high (e.g. Ciccone, Cingano and Cipollone, 2006) and lead to higher salary levels, and particularly for workers in the south of the country, a lower risk of unemployment. The study by Ciccone (2004) considers the impact of investment in human resources on future tax revenues, namely the “tax yield” of investment in education, estimating that over the long term, spending on education is self-financing, if we assume that the real cost of financing this investment is 3%.

While still positive and fairly high, current measurements of returns to education in Italy are lower than in other OECD countries (Checchi 2003). This is surprising, given that the percentage of graduates out of the total population is lower in Italy than in other countries, so we would expect higher returns to education, particularly university study, given the relative scarcity (Visco, 2008). A not particularly positive picture of the most educated workers’ professional performance also emerges in some studies (Laj and Raitano, 2006; Istat, 2006). These indicate that Italy has a significant over-education phenomenon: possible mismatches between the expertise acquired by workers and that required by companies and/or the existence of limits in demand for qualified workers (Franzini and Raitano, 2005) could lead to a surplus of graduates, with consequent negative effects both in terms of “intellectual unemployment”, or of possible “underemployment” of workers. The representation of the underemployment phenomenon provided by Istat (2006) quantifies the number of underemployed people in Italy at more than three and a half million, half of them young people; this number also includes people over the age of 35, however, among whom there are strong discrepancies in the phenomenon of underemployment depending on their type of degree, with particularly low levels for science and engineering graduates.

Unioncamere’s Excelsior report (2007), which quantifies “pure” excess demand broken down by type of qualification, shows that university degrees for which demand from companies outstrips supply are those in the engineering, economics and statistics, medical and scientific fields. Excess supply affects other disciplines, notably in the socio-political, law, literature, psychology, linguistics and geo-biology areas.

In light of the fragmentation of professional opportunities depending on the different types of degree, the question also arises as to whether area of study contributes to variations in returns to education. The study of Di Pietro and Cutillo (2006) looks at the probability of over-education and wage differentials by degree type. For women, the probability of over-education is lower for those who studied engineering, architecture and science subjects. A similar result is obtained for men, with the only difference being the low probability of over-education for law graduates.

A recent study (Ballarino and Bratti, 2006) looks at the phenomenon from an historical viewpoint, comparing employment outcomes according to the surveys carried out every three years by Istat, and relating to four cohorts of graduates, three years after their graduation. The authors confirm that some degree courses lead to greater professional opportunities, but also signal a relative decline in this regard in the 1990s, in terms of both employment chances and permanent employment opportunities. This phenomenon is said to extend to all subjects. According to the authors, the better relative performance of the scientific and quantitative disciplines is probably partly related to supply scarcity. This is the “crisis in scientific vocations” hypothesis (Benadusi, della Ratta-Rinaldi, Neri 2005). This expression refers to a trend, also observed in other European countries, and which, in the case of Italy, could represent disaffection partly related to objective difficulties in study and learning that students experience in these disciplines during secondary school (well documented by PISA tests). In other words, the school system is failing to support the educational path of many students in quantitative disciplines, with the effect that they become discouraged.

1.2. Regional differences in education, migratory flows and development

Studies on the quality of student’s preparation vary greatly according to region. In particular, the results of PISA tests show how students’ average preparation levels are much lower in the south than in the north. This result is hardly surprising in light of the importance of the effects of background.

The study by Bratti, Checchi and Filippin (2007) suggests the factors that determine the results of PISA tests, including an extensive set of explanatory variables. Regional differences in the results may be due to various factors: the family environment (both in terms of the level of parents’ education and household income), school facilities, the region’s economic environment (measured through employment rates and scope of the black economy). Taking all these factors into account, the gap between the north and the south narrows significantly.

Research by Brunello and Cappellari (2005) shows how studying at a southern university generates lower returns compared to studying at northern universities. This produces an effect of economic inequality for students from the south of the country, given the significant financial burden involved in moving to the north to study.

The study by Checchi and Peragine (2005) shows how the importance of family background in determining school results is decidedly greater in the south than in the north, creating a significant lack of equality of opportunity.

It is therefore clear that, given the well-known dualism of our economy, it is on this area that policy actions need to focus in the next few years. Studies in the last few years relating to the relationship between education and economic development in the south have also taken into account particular phenomena, given the growing regional mobility of the most qualified members of the workforce. In particular, one of the factors that has been noted is the growing propensity of the most educated workers to emigrate from the south to the north. Since 1997,

the migratory flow from the south to the north has been constantly increasing, and the level of education of workers moving from the south to the north is now higher. In particular, as highlighted by D'Antonio and Scarlato (2007), the propensity among southerners who study in the north to remain there after graduation has increased significantly, and the number of people who subsequently choose to move to the north to work after graduating in the south has also risen.

Mariani (2007) throws another interesting aspect into light. This study puts forward an interpretation focusing on the possibility that one of the incentives to migration is the need to overcome the strong social stratification typical of the most economically backward regions. Here, the concept of social capital and the role of social ties as a factor of economic growth fully comes into play. Sabatini's study (2009) highlights how strong family ties have unfavourable effects on growth, while the development of "weak" social ties tends to increase opportunities on the market for those excluded from informal recruitment networks. The relationship between family background and employment paths therefore has a direct impact on decisions relating to graduates' geographical mobility (D'Antonio and Scarlato, 2007).

On this point, the question of education again returns to the fore, as a factor able to break individuals' ties to their social and cultural background. Studies show, however, that school results in Italy remain largely determined by family levels of education and household income (Draghi, 2006).

1.3. Worker and job turnover, transitions between unemployment and employment

Labour market reforms aimed at increasing employment flexibility are also likely to have had effects on entry and exit employment flows.

Some recent studies have focused on this aspect, highlighting the main characteristics of Italian job market flows, the existence of empirical regularities at international level, the role of costs in hiring and firing, and more generally, the rigidity of employment protection legislation in Italy, in influencing worker and job turnover.

The work edited by Contini and Trivellato (2005) contains numerous contributions that seek to investigate the measuring, characteristics and development of mobility in the Italian labour market. In particular, Contini and Pacelli (2005) propose a detailed critical analysis of the main indicators of mobility (gross worker turnover and job turnover), showing the main related methodological and interpretative problems and reassessing empirical evidence on mobility in the Italian labour market in light of these considerations. The empirical evidence (which refers to the 1980s-1990s) shows that flows on the Italian labour market (chiefly with reference to workers) are notably higher than those estimated for other European countries (like Germany or Belgium) and not too distant from those estimated for countries traditionally considered more flexible, like the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Overall, unlike studies based on aggregate historical series (see, for example, that of Piacentini and Prezioso (2007)), these studies based on micro-data do not show a "structural break" in turnover rates in the second half of the 1990s, suggesting that the "Treu Law⁴⁷" -

⁴⁷ Law n. 196/97

namely the law that actuated the process of labour market flexibility - has had a modest impact on this aspect, or one that is at least offset by cyclical and demographic-structural factors.

Generally, there is significant diversity in the incidence of mobility according to different worker and company characteristics: the relatively more mobile workers are women, young people and those employed in small companies, that is the relatively weaker groups on the job market. Firm size seems, moreover, more influential than age. There are also notable differences in mobility in different geographical regions, with much lower mobility in the north-west and higher mobility in the north-east and the south. This is partly due to differences determined by composition effects, and, as shown by Leombruni and Quaranta (2005), the two high-mobility areas differ by type of prevalent flow: while in the north-east, transitions are mainly direct between companies (possibly punctuated by short periods of unemployment), the transition from one job to another in the south is often interrupted by long episodes of unemployment.

Studies that aim to explore the relationship between employment growth, employment protection legislation and turnover rates have shown the importance of institutional factors and the different measurement criteria used in labour market statistics. The bulk of international literature on the subject has pointed out the limits of indicators based on the traditional division between the employed, unemployed and other workforces for studies on transitions, particularly in labour markets with high mobility and ones that cover brief reference periods. The work of Gennari and Gatti (2004) represents a first attempt to exploit the longitudinal dimension of Istat data on workforces, to construct indices that are better able to capture the temporal variation in the professional status of the individuals interviewed and the complexity of the job market as a whole.

Trivellato, Paggiaro, Leombruni and Rosati (2005) explore the mobility of some specific groups of workers, and consider among others those who initially were not employed (unemployed or inactive). They divided the non-employed by those with previous work experience and those entering the job market for the first time. Mobility is significantly higher for the non-employed with experience, while among those finding employment for the first time, 60-65% keep it over the year without further change. The percentage falls to around 40-45% for the non-employed with previous experience, indicating that these categories tend to have more irregular career histories.

A specific vein of studies on transitions from unemployment to employment uses microeconomic methods of analysis, which concentrate on individual characteristics, making hypotheses on individuals' behaviour. In recent works, the study of flows from unemployment to employment has focused on assessing two aspects with important implications for economic policy. The first concerns the transition from non-employment to employment, the frequency and role of temporary contracts as a means of entry. The second concerns workers remaining in their initial employment situation, and the subsequent valuation of the transition from the condition of an atypical worker, that is if this condition represents a launching pad to stable employment or the trap of temporary employment, in which continuous episodes of unemployment alternate with brief periods of employment.

With regards to the first aspect, Sciulli (2006a, 2006b) studies the effects of the Treu reform and the introduction of more flexible contracts, and how these have contributed to lowering unemployment in Italy. Specifically, using the Whip (*Work Histories Italian Panel*) database on a sample of young people between the ages of 16 and 32, Sciulli (2006a) explores how the reform has changed duration dependence for flows from unemployment, and if the probability of making the transition to permanent employment is higher for the unemployed or temporary workers. The results show an increase in negative duration dependence for transitions from unemployment, which indicates a further segmentation between the short- and long-term unemployed. The suggested reason for this is that in a more flexible market, in which it is easier to find a job, long-term unemployment may be considered as a sign of low productivity, which companies can exploit as an important screening instrument in their hiring policies.

The author, however, does not find evidence that the probability of finding a stable job is significantly higher for temporary workers than for the unemployed, although the duration of the temporary contract seems to have a positive impact on the subsequent transition to a permanent job, suggesting the existence of a human capital accumulation effect for atypical workers. There is greater divergence if the impact of individual characteristics is considered: men, people living in northern regions and specialist workers generally have a greater probability of moving from unemployment or from a temporary contract to a stable job.

Berton (2008) also mines this vein of study, testing the validity of the theoretical model proposed by Garibaldi and Berton (2006) for the Italian labour market. The author applies a model of discrete-time competing risks duration model, using a sample of unemployed people between the ages of 20 and 40 on the Whip database. The estimates obtained show that: the average duration of unemployment is long, around a year, and increases with age; part-time workers have longer durations of unemployment, while those who were previously employed with a training-employment contract, report lower waiting times; aside from the duration of unemployment, making a transition into temporary employment is more likely than making one into permanent employment.

In conclusion, Berton (2008) shows how temporary employment contracts represent the fastest route back into employment for those who have previously lost their jobs. However, it is shown how the introduction of atypical contracts has not yet been able to solve the problem of the high average duration of unemployment.

Contrary to the findings of Sciulli (2006a, 2006b), some recent studies have shown that temporary employment represents a better launching pad for the transition into stable employment than being unemployed (Hernanz *et al.*, 2005; Picchio, 2006; Picchio, 2007), as it offers an opportunity to improve one's abilities and avoid the decline in human capital inherent in long episodes of unemployment.

A significant question in the study of transitions between unemployment and employment concerns the role of support programmes helping the unemployed re-enter the labour market. Paggiaro *et al.* (2005) look at the effects of mobility lists on the probability of obtaining a new job. The study has two main results: the impact of an additional year in the passive

component, of income support for the unemployed, seems to reduce the employment rate of those included on these lists and increase the waiting time for a new job; in contrast, the extension of a year in the active component, wage subsidies paid to the companies that hire workers, seems to have a positive impact on the employment of men, while the effect is not statistically significant for women.

2. Training choices and employment paths: projects in progress

2.1. Isfol's longitudinal survey into school-work transitions

In 2010 Isfol will launch a longitudinal survey into school-work transitions.

Once running, the study will be able to provide a wide-ranging knowledge base on young people. The longitudinal structure will enable training paths, employment outcomes and paths to enter the job market, professional development courses to be assessed for several years from when people first enter employment. A particularly wide survey base will be able to take into consideration all aspects that determine, directly or indirectly, education-training paths, employment outcomes and career profiles.

Italy lacks a source of longitudinal data on young people able to meet the needs of operators and particularly assessors of public policies. Similar studies abroad are, in contrast, widespread, and these include the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth carried out in the US by the Bureau of Labour Statistics; the National longitudinal survey of children and youth, conducted in Canada; the National Education Longitudinal Study, carried out by the Department of Education in the United States; the British Household Panel Survey launched by the Research Centre for Micro-Social Change of the University of Essex.

The Isfol survey is intended to satisfy organically the bulk of the demand for statistical information on young people, dealing with issues including training choices, the transition to employment, family background, the results and returns of training, training in skills in the first few years of entering the labour market and career profiles.

It will look at crucial issues for young people through a continual process of monitoring over time, which once up and running, will provide a database that will provide support to operators in the sector, including policy makers, universities, the professional training sector and companies, as has been available for years in other countries.

The survey will look at more than 37,000 individuals between the ages of 16 and 25, and is designed to gradually cover individual age cohorts.

It will begin in 2010 with the cohorts of 16, 19 and 22 year-olds. In subsequent surveys, as well as following the individual cohorts that were covered in the first year of the survey, samples will be taken of new cohorts of 16, 19 and 22 year-olds. In this manner, the second year will cover the population of 16, 17, 19, 20, 22 and 23 year-olds, and in four years, the age bracket from 16 to 25 years old will be covered.

In terms of sampling technique, the cohort of 16 year-olds will be treated differently from the others.

16 year-olds, who go to school or training centres, will be surveyed through the selection of a balanced sample of schools/training centres. The remaining 16 year-olds, who have left education, will be sampled through their school records.

In particular, the design study established the need for a strong link with the OECD-Pisa (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey conducted in Italy by Invalsi, establishing the systematic use of relative data. This survey is carried out every three years (the last one was conducted in April 2009) and is intended to study, through cognitive tests, the skills acquired by 15 year-old students in reading, mathematics and science.

With reference to the Isfol survey of 2010, a sub-sample of 16 year-olds who took part in the 2009 OECD-Pisa survey, will be re-interviewed. In this way, the survey on school-work transitions, carried out every three years, will boost the mass of information relating to the cognitive abilities of those interviewed, measured through the Pisa questionnaires. Within a longitudinal analysis, it will therefore be possible both to assess the predictive capacity of these human capital indicators and relate them to training and employment outcomes.

19 and 22 year-olds will be selected through a sample stratified on several levels from municipal records.

All the initial interviews (every time that a new cohort enters a sample) will be carried out using Capi (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) technology. 16 year-olds will be interviewed at school or training centres, while the 19 and 22 year-olds will be interviewed at home.

Re-interviews in subsequent years will be carried out using a mix of techniques, in one of the following ways according to the circumstances: computer-assisted telephone interview (commonly known as CATI), the self-completed computer-assisted interview via the web, interviews by post and direct interview. A mix of techniques will be used in order to guarantee that an individual interviewed the first time is also questioned in subsequent surveys. The use of different methods allows an interview to be obtained even from people who would not be reachable through a single survey method.

For each cohort, four years after the first interview, an attrition assessment will be carried out and will take into consideration the possibility of adding new units to the sample.

Sample size is approximately 3,500 units for each age cohort. This number has been calculated in order to ensure the evaluations produced by defined fields of analysis (type, qualification, regional area, individual cohorts or aggregations of these) are of significance.

2.2. The Isfol support project for regional administrations

The recent researches concerning the guidance system highlight a reduced effectiveness of guidance services, due to a strong fragmentation and incompleteness of answers offered by the different services. Consequently, the guidance is provided discontinuously and the relationship between all actors involved is scarce (Pavoncello, 2008). Due to the changes of social context and labour market, it is necessary to renew the link between vocational training and guidance, accompanying the social insertion of young people and putting in value the experiences of adults. In order to solve problems concerning the lack of communication

between VET system and guidance services, the recent studies highlight the adoption of new operating modes ensuring high quality services in an adequate lapse of time, starting from the needs of users and evaluating the fruition cycle rather than from the supply of the services (Sarchielli, 2007).

The Isfol support project for regional administrations sets out a series of measures intended to support the activity of the Regions in terms of employment policy and transition processes (understood as both the process of entering/re-entering, and that of remaining in and withdrawing from the labour market). Specifically, support measures relate to the provision of methodologies, techniques and equipment necessary to define at strategic and operational levels measures to combat the career guidance crisis.

In line with the indications provided by the European Union, which identifies career guidance and training as the levers to deal with the profound social and economic changes that we are experiencing, Isfol has for years been working to define the cultural aspects and operational measures aimed at different targets (defined both on the basis of the life cycle – young people and adults – and with respect to the positions occupied – workers, directors, etc.).

The current labour market calls for a reassessment of career guidance practices, which can no longer deal with traditional targets, but must respond to increasingly complex and urgent questions, requiring a reassessment of guidance measures in terms of transversality in training and work systems. In this framework, local administrations are supported in two ways:

- the Regions are aided in interpreting the strategic aspects and synergic actions to be considered in launching integrated measures to respond to the crisis
- professional practices are implemented to favour the entry/re-entry of people on the job market and ensuring they remain part of the workforce, with a view to overcoming different stereotypes (related both to personal/professional ageing and to type) and exploiting to the full the competencies acquired in different environments in their personal/professional lives.

Against this backdrop are the activities that the area has implemented over the years, namely:

1. support activities and outplacements for managing working transitions and for strengthening innovation processes and competitiveness
2. guidance service to support active ageing
3. orientation in different times of life. Policy for a better work-life balance
4. the creation of a professional project relating to the regional context
5. skills assessment service
6. guidance in times of crisis: employability skills
7. testing service
8. implementation and testing of models and instruments for career guidance in support of employability of parties at risk – proposed activities

9. orientation service aimed at increasing the skills of young people to plan a professional path relating to the regional context

For an updated overview of the methodologies, techniques, as well as the valuation of policies and measures under way in Italy on the issue of career guidance and support in the periods of labour transition, please see the bibliographical selection.

2.3. Career guidance counselling at the University of Catania

The Career Guidance Counselling Service, created in 1998 in order to resume and revitalise the guidelines of guidance work launched in 1958 with the foundation in Catania of the first services centre for university students, currently has the following objectives:

- to develop guidance for incoming university students
- to raise awareness and train teaching staff in secondary education
- to distribute documentation and information
- to promote research and testing in the career guidance field.

The general aim is to support young people, through the irreplaceable mediation of teaching staff-educators, in making post-diploma training and professional decisions, providing a picture of the professions appropriate to the current situation. This picture is related on the one hand to the perception that the students have of themselves and their abilities and interests, and on the other hand by different available academic curricula and the employment market in which it is necessary to seek a job after completing their studies.

The Centre has carried out and continues to carry out specific research activities and provides the instruments for use in work with schools, in order to raise awareness among young people of their abilities, educational and professional interests, motivations, expectations and personal traits. As well as the traditional services of assistance and counselling for problems relating to study courses, the frequency of courses, the method of study, the tutoring, the career centre etc., the Centre offers a specific counselling service for students with psychological issues relating to their path of learning. Some publications on the issue of career guidance of the research group of the University of Catania are listed in the bibliography.

Conclusions

The numerous contributions mentioned highlighted some aspects concerning the relationship between the Italian VET system and the results in terms of job placement.

In general, the earning of education has a quite high value, either in terms of income or in terms of prevention of the unemployment risk. The sector-based studies concerning the analysis of job supply and demand highlight a likely mismatch between the competences acquired and those requested by the labour market. In particular, it happens mainly in the

following fields: political science, literature, geology and biology, law, generating an over-education phenomenon. On the contrary, an over-demand occurs for scientific matters and for economics, statistics, medicine and engineering.

At local level, a gap between North and South is clearly visible, in terms of students' performance and value of education. The researches about mobility highlight the fields in which the flexibility of labour market has had the most negative effects. One of the issues of those studies concern the role of education and training as facilitating factor for the job insertion or re-insertion, in case of labour lost. In a more flexible and fickle labour market, one aspect to be further investigated is the role of specialized human capital: does it represent a guarantee for maintaining the job or, on the contrary, it would be more rewarding a general education, that can be adapted to different jobs?

The answer to this question must be still found. In the field of formal education, the 2007 OCDE data confirmed that Italy is distinguished from the others by a significant number of individuals (33%) enrolled to the upper secondary school having an high rate of technical and professional contents but doesn't allow to acquire a qualification useable for the labour market. Furthermore, with reference to the non formal learning, the amount of hours devoted to training programmes strictly linked to the job activity is lower than in other countries and concerns mostly the workers with an high level of education.

In this context, particularly interesting are the in-depth examinations aimed to estimate if the policies increasing the professional and technical contents of formal education or the strengthening of non formal learning for unemployed and inactive people with a low degree can play a strategic role for individually accompanying people during their transition toward the labour market.

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